

Leaflet - January 2010

MHS in the Press

Regarding the Article in the January Issue of Boston Magazine...

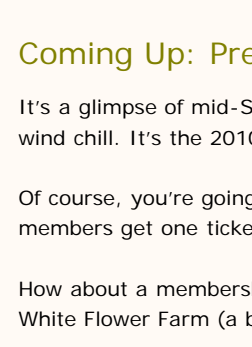
When a newspaper reporter or a magazine writer calls to say that they're writing an article and would like to talk to you, you know two things. The first is that the writer didn't wake up that particular morning and decide to write something. Especially in the case of a magazine article, the writer has already 'pitched' his or her editor with a story angle and the editor found the idea sufficiently provocative to say 'go for it'.

The resulting article is disappointing more for what it doesn't say than for what it does. Storrs reaches all the way back to the 19th Century to find shortcomings in the organization (though he spends the most time dwelling on the cancellation of the 2009 New England Spring Flower Show).

When the phone rings and it's a reporter/writer on the other end of the line, an organization has two options: be pleasant and cooperate or else decline to comment or offer assistance. Doing the latter isn't going to stop the article from being written.

What will happen the next time the phone rings? We'll likely be cooperative again. The Boston Globe and Wellesley Townsman ran wonderful, informative staff-written pieces about the Festival of Trees. We're encouraged that comments in Boston magazine's on-line edition are uniformly critical of the article's one-sided nature.

It's Official: It's a Smash!



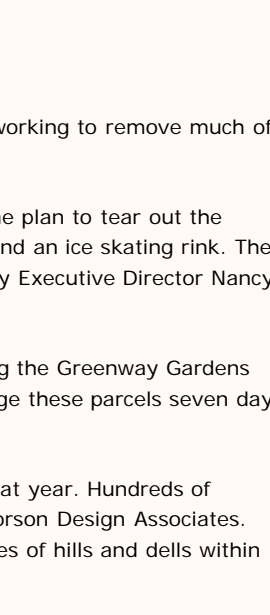
MassHort's Festival of Trees concluded December 4, but plans are already underway for a 2010 edition that will be bigger, better and, well, more festive. "I exceeded every expectation," says Joyce Bakshi, chair of the event.

Mostly, though, there will be more trees. "We didn't start looking for trees until the middle of October," Joyce says. "All through the Festival, business owners and individuals kept coming up to me and saying, 'This is fabulous. Why didn't you let me know? I would have given you a tree!'"

And what about individuals who want to sponsor trees? "Tell us early," Joyce says. "Michael Vink (a MassHort member) called and said he would like to sponsor a tree and came up with the idea of a Red Sox theme after speaking with Holly Berry."

So, how do you top a great 2009? "We learned so much," Joyce says. "Next year we'll have afternoon hours to accommodate groups and after-school groups. We'll have more decorations outdoors along the pathways to the gardens and lots of outdoor lights."

"We already have commitments for next year," Joyce smiles. "People loved being a part of such a family-friendly event and they can't wait to do it again. Just give us a call and we'll get back in touch."



Some Big 2010 New England Holidays

Coming Up: President's Day, Valentine's Day... and the Flower Show!

It's a glimpse of mid-Spring while an inimitable winter holds its grip on New England. It's a four-day holiday from the snow, the ice and the wind. It's the 2010 Boston Flower & Garden Show and right in the middle of it will be Blooms!

Of course, you're going – the flower show is a New England tradition. And, if you're a MassHort member, you're going for free. Individual members get one ticket, family memberships get two free tickets with discounts for additional family members.

How about a membership as a Valentine's Day present? With that membership, you not only get tickets, you also get a \$25 gift certificate at White Flower Farm (a bright red Amaryllis would make a smashing present).

But tickets and gift certificates are just the beginning of membership benefits. It's going to be a great 2010 at MassHort and at Elm Bank. "Wednesday Evenings at Elm Bank" will be back with a great list of horticultural talks.

Your membership card is your admission to most of these events. We've got a whole year worth of reasons why you need to renew today. Renew today or learn more about the great benefits of membership.

More About the Show

The Boston Flower & Garden Show will incorporate MassHort's Blooms! 2010. While the Paragon Group, the sponsor of the Boston Flower & Garden Show, will be responsible for landscape exhibits, vendors and most speakers: MassHort's Blooms! will encompass pretty much everything else.

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Now on the Endangered List: Boston's Greenway Gardens

Until recently, a quiet drama was unfolding in Boston. Officials of the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy were working to remove much of the Greenway Gardens built by MassHort that occupy three high-visibility parcels near South Station.

Then, in November, WGBH's public affairs program, "Greater Boston," put a spotlight on the plan to tear out the gardens and use the space for things such as farmers markets, arts fairs, public concerts and an ice skating rink.

The Greenway Gardens were built at a cost of \$850,000 over the course of 2008, opening formally in October of that year. Hundreds of volunteers augmented by professional landscaping firms and arborists created the gardens using a plan from Halvorson Design Associates.

MassHort built the gardens when the parcels were managed by the now-defunct Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. In February 2009, the inconvertible leveling of the gardens and use the space for things such as farmers markets, arts fairs, public concerts and an ice skating rink.

Since that time, MassHort has repeatedly offered to maintain and improve the parcels at no cost to the Conservancy. The Conservancy has consistently declined the offer.

Most recently, a Facebook page, "Save Boston's Greenway Gardens" has been created. Comments on the page are uniformly in favor of leaving the gardens in place. You can make a statement and keep up with the latest news by becoming a fan of this page.

In November, the key comment made and question asked by Greater Boston host Rooney was, "So much of the Greenway is just concrete and grass. The Greenway Gardens are a treasure. Why not just leave them alone?"

With the Halvorson design, MassHort succeeded in creating a garden of extraordinary beauty that, to some observers, creates an unwanted comparison with the Institutional nature of many of the other Greenway parcels. It would be a tragedy to re-make the parcels, especially to turn them into inorganic programmatic sites such as an ice skating rink.

With the fate of the Greenway Gardens now firmly within the control of the Conservancy, only public pressure can stop what appears to be the inconvertible leveling of the gardens. Can a Facebook page and a segment on a television public affairs program save the one part of the Greenway that lives up to its name?

Corliss lectured and presented workshops on growing plants and on photography to garden groups throughout the country, and was a frequent contributor to numerous horticultural publications including the Garden Club of America's on-line publication *The Real Dirt*.

A consummate horticulturist, she designed and maintained a fascinating garden on Edgell Hill Road, Brookline, MA for 30-plus years. Her garden, which featured native plants, was often open to the public. Her indoor light room was filled with interesting, unusual, and hard-to-grow specimen plants.

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Corliss was honored by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society with a gold medal for her achievements in horticulture, and by the Garden Club of America with the GCA National Achievement Medal. In addition she was honored by the Town of Brookline, for her 30-year membership in the Tree Planting Committee.

A long-time member of the Chestnut Hill Garden Club, Ms. Engle served as its president and in almost every other leadership position of the club. Corliss published the club's newsletter, updated procedures, led and then mentored propagation and photography workshops.

She co-authored revised GCA Judging guide, and was instrumental in setting up the procedures to support the Archives of American Gardens at the Smithsonian Institution.

Corliss started and mentored the new GCA photography program, defining the criteria for the photography judging program. An avid and talented photographer, her numerous photographs of gardens are now an integral part of both the Smithsonian and the Arnold Arboretum's collections.

An exacting administrator, Corliss developed and revised numerous forms and booklets for the various not for profits she worked with – including reworking the scales of points by which all the garden and horticulture exhibits of the New England Spring Flower Show and Blooms!

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Master Gardeners Graduate a Class of 43

It was still summer for most of us when the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association 2009 fall class began in early September at Elm Bank. But for people like April Daly and Mike Fenollosa, it was the start of a 14-week journey that can lead to a lifetime commitment to the Master Gardener program.

Over those 14 weeks, they and more than three dozen classmates listened to and questioned experts on the things that make up the horticultural world. Each week they received and did homework, and after thirteen weeks they were handed a terrifyingly thick ten-page exam.

"It was an awesome experience," says April Daly. "It was a combination of classroom learning plus hands-on training: pruning labs, propagation labs, and working with experts. The instructors were superb. People like Roger Swain entertained us and transferred knowledge without ever seeing to lecture."

On their fourteenth week of instruction, they started to learn the 'how to's' of being a Master Gardener: how to work with home gardeners calling the Helpline for assistance, how to become a speaker in the Speakers' Bureau, a terrifying chance to identify diseases (or was it insect damage?) on leaves and branches and so forth.

On December 17th, the group arrived to find the Hunnewell Building decorated festively for their graduation. One at a time, 43 new Master Gardeners each received an Intern badge. Once they complete 60 hours of structured volunteer time—including more education, gardening, outreach (working with the public) and so forth—they will move up to fully certified Master Gardeners.

They will continue to work, soaking up the experience and culture of the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association. Many are especially looking forward to the Boston Flower & Garden Show where they will help to man the Master Gardener Helpline Booth, help build a major landscape exhibit, and assist in Blooms!, MassHort's portion of the show.

"I'm intrigued by the speakers' bureau and hope to be a part of it," April says. "What I learned here can also tie into things I do with several other organizations." Mike, who plans to put in volunteer hours at the Flower Show, has an equally practical plan for his educational experience.

At the graduation they also watched as graduates of earlier classes moved up from intern to certified, from certified to advanced and finally to Lifetime Master Gardener, an acknowledgement of years of volunteering and working to further gardening and gardening education for the public.

"This is a wonderful experience for anyone who loves plants, gardening, or the outdoors," April says. "I learned far more than I ever thought I would. It was an educational bargain."

Education Coordinator Sonja Johanson, who guided the class through its coursework, says that every Master Gardener class has a distinct personality. "This class really showed an amazing spirit of volunteerism," she says. "Offering our time and talents is at the heart of the Master Gardener program, so when this group of students threw themselves into volunteering, it meant that they became an instant part of our community."

Are you interested in expanding your horticultural knowledge, becoming a part of a community where learning and sharing horticultural, environmental and information with the public? The next MMGA Master Gardener class will be in the fall of 2010. To find out more, email Sonja Johanson at sonjajohanson@comcast.net, or check the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association website. We'd love to meet you.

Research Biologist Unlocks the Secrets of the Name Game

On Sunday, January 17 at 1:30 p.m. in the Putnam Building at Elm Bank, Arthur Haines, Research Biologist at the New England Wild Flower Society, will lead us through the often puzzling world of horticultural nomenclature. Why is something called what it is, and why would anyone ever want to change that? For those whose Latin is not an easily spoken second language, such changes can be very annoying.

Arthur Haines began his botanical study in the mountains of western Maine searching for state rare species with Les Eastman. His early experience involved working at the University of Maine Herbarium and participating in field trips of the Josselyn Botanical Society. He performed graduate studies in systematics at the University of Maine under Christopher Campbell (Flora of Maine and hybridization in Schoenoplectus). Arthur is currently employed by the New England Wild Flower Society as a research botanist. He is also a regional reviewer for the Flora of North America project and a contributor for the genera Euthamia (Asteraceae) and Eriogonum (Rosaceae).

The Indoor Jungle

by Neal Sanders  
Leaflet Contributor

I write these words a few days before Christmas with a large, unruly bougainvillea sprawling the top of my head. To my right are lush orchids and more bougainvillea. I'm not spending the holidays on some exotic Caribbean island, however. There's a foot of snow outside and the temperature is in the low teens. This tropical jungle is in my own home.

From May to early October, the gardens around my home sport a profusion of containers and our porch and deck are awash in greenery and flowers. This year there were more than forty container gardens ranging in size from 14-inch pots to 30-gallon behemoths. In our screened porch, dozens of individual plants were arrayed on trays and benches. On our deck, more containers and heat-loving tropicals provided color into September.

But when overnight temperatures dipped into the 40s, the tender plants began migrating indoors. The tropicals were the first to make the move, followed by hardier succulents, cyclamen and herbs. As annuals subjected to frost, the containers that bore them were washed and stowed in the basement. The property has been bare of containers since early November.

Indoors, though, is a Neah's Ark of the plant kingdom. They crowd in front of every window, especially those with a southern exposure. I share my office with a rack of sun-tolerant plants plus two hanging bougainvillea. The aforementioned orchids are in the hallway where there is a triple window. There are half a dozen neomarica, better known as walking iris, that were cut from a mother plant in late summer. They will grow through the winter, and be given away in the spring. Down in the basement where a bank of ground-level windows allow in feeble sun, a magnificent papyrus – rescued from our water garden – stands four feet tall and brushes up against the ceiling. Nearly a dozen spathiphyllum, commonly called the peace lily, are scattered around the house. There seems to be one in every room.

It is out in the garage, though, that the extent of our plant asylum becomes apparent. Betty mixes perennials and annuals in containers, often with dramatic results. When she pulled apart those containers in October, many of the perennials showed well-developed root systems. She made the decision to winter over the best of the plants.

However, we do not have a greenhouse. What we have, instead, is a large, well-insulated garage that stays above freezing and has a large, southwest-facing window. There, up against the glass are huddled more than a dozen containers. There is an enormous, cattail-patterned concrete urn where a fern is going through its dormancy period. A white Italianate container holds a now-well-established trailing *herichrysum petiolare*, other known as a licorice plant, that has found its hibernal equilibrium. Various salvia, verbena, and gaura have been sharply trimmed back but are holding their own and seem poised to survive a New England winter.

Logic says we should consider our plants disposable: chuck them into the compost pile as we do hundreds of annuals. But logic isn't the be-all and end-all of gardening. Strange as it may seem to some people, many of these plants are old friends. The bougainvillea over my head (which also sheds leaves onto my keyboard) are more than a decade old. I know it well. Come February it will bloom a pale purple, much to my delight. The brackets will linger into late April. I could no more imagine leaving it out on the porch to freeze than I could do such a thing to our family cat. (Then again, plants never have 'accidents' on Oriental rugs.)

Being sentimental about a plant is, in my view, a very good trait. They bring us pleasure and prod our senses. They invoke memory. Sharing a window with a bougainvillea is a small price to pay for the reminder that spring will come again.

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.

January Horticultural Hints

by Betty Sanders  
Lifetime Master Gardener

That first big storm the week before Christmas, and the one that seems to have started New Year's Day and never stopped, should be reminders that snow removal in New England requires a plan that keeps plants and shrubs in mind. Whether you shovel your own or pay a contractor, there needs to be an understanding of where the snow goes – and where it doesn't. Too much snow, particularly when compacted by a plow, damages trees and shrubs. Salt included in the snow can cause damage to many of the plants, including the ones underground right now.

Here are some other thoughts about dealing with snow: First, because surface salt damages plants, keep the use of salts on walkways and driveways to an absolute minimum. Often, you can make surfaces safe with sand, Kitty litter and sawdust, none of which affect plants. Second, even though there may be snow on the ground, clear areas with plants and perennials underneath as walking on them will damage them. The same advice goes for grassy areas as well: you can inadvertently compact soil, depriving roots of oxygen. Take your winter walks on paths.

Christmas trees aren't just for the holidays. They can brighten our spirits all winter. Placed upright, out of strong winds, they provide shelter for birds. Cut apart for their branches, they can be used to protect plants in beds from frost/thaw cycles. The cold is never as bad for plants as the midwinter thaws which can expose roots to the next cold wave.

Look out your window and enjoy your garden in winter. If the view isn't everything you hoped, start making notes now in order to know what you want to add come planting time. Come to Elm Bank in Wellesley for a walk through the MHS gardens. There, you will find many wonderful plants that provide multiple seasons of interest.

Houseplants need special care now. Use lukewarm water when watering—tap water can be very cold at this time of year, and most indoor plants have tropical origins. Water sparingly and don't use fertilizer for at least another month. If your plants are starting to lean toward the window, give them a quarter turn each week to even out their vertical growth. Remember not to allow plants to touch cold panes of glass or to close plants behind draperies when you are buttoning up your home for the night.

A January bath will improve houseplant health. Use a plastic bag to cover the soil and place the plant in a sink or tub and spray gently with tepid water. By removing dust and any household pollutants, you'll do your plants a world of good as well as improve their appearance. Wiping each leaf with a clean cloth can serve the same purpose but is much more time consuming. Finally, spend a day with the seed catalogs. Even if you prefer to buy most of your plants at the nursery, catalogs can provide wonderful insights into plants of interest and introduce you to new cultivars.

We Have an Author in Our Midst

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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.