



December 2018

[DONATE NOW](#)



Letter from the Interim President

Dear Members,

It has been a wonderful time to step into the Interim President/Executive Director role at Massachusetts Horticultural Society. The maple outside of my window when I first walked into the office was at the height of its red splendor, and the staff, board, and volunteers were at an incredible level of activity preparing for Festival of Trees.

Watching The Gardens at Elm Bank shift into dormancy only highlights the beauty of the trees, the graceful lines of the garden designs, and an awareness of the life beneath the soil, leaves, and mulch preparing to winter over.

I am aware of my great good fortune to serve at the helm of such a venerable institution at a time of change and forward movement into a vital leadership and educational role in a world buckling under the weight of climate change. With horticulture and education at the core of our mission we can make such a difference together with our members, guests, and supporters and seek better ways of growing, living, and caring for our planet.

Plants make all the air we breathe and the food we eat.

I look forward to meeting you at Festival of Trees, in a class or in the garden.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Maas
Interim President/Executive Director

Upcoming Classes & Events:

[Festival of Trees](#)

Friday and Saturday,
December 7 and 8
10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
and Sunday, December 9
10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

[Digital Photography Workshop](#)

Thursday, December 13
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

[Botany for the Home Gardener](#)

Tuesdays,
January 8 - Feb 12
6:30 - 8 p.m.

[Landscape and Planting Design](#)

Thursdays,
January 10 - 31
7 - 9 p.m.

[Designing the Winter Landscape](#)

Wednesdays,
January 16 and 23

[Potager Gardens](#)

Thursday, January 17
7 - 8:30 p.m.

[Artists of New England and their Gardens](#)

Thursday, January 24
1 - 5 p.m.

[Greenhouse Growing and Maintenance](#)

Saturday, January 26
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

There's Still Time to Visit Our Festival of Trees!



of Trees! We hope you can make it to this important and festive fundraiser.

In our Hunnewell Building, we will showcase over 65 decorated trees in both ornate and amusing trimmings. Each tree is donated and decorated by a local business, garden club, or individual. Visitors have the chance to win their favorite tree at the end of the event by entering the raffle which takes place throughout the festival. Proceeds support Mass Hort and The Gardens at Elm Bank. And in the Education Building, we have Snow Village, an enchanted exhibit of holiday villages and trains that include a model Fenway Park, London, the North Pole, and a carnival!

Santa visits on Friday to Sunday, 1 - 4 p.m. and horse-drawn carriage rides will take place Friday from 1 - 3 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 1 - 5 p.m. *We suggest you purchase your carriage ride tickets*

early as seats have been filling up before 5 p.m.

This year, we have expanded the lighting on the grounds, so be prepared to walk outside. And be sure to spend some time looking at the botanical art completed in Sarah Roche's class on site this autumn.

Festival Hours:

Friday - Saturday, December 7 – 8: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Sunday, December 9: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

For everyone who has come to the Festival and purchased raffle tickets, remember that we will be calling winners from 6 - 8 p.m. Sunday night!

Have questions? Visit our [website](#) or call 617-933-4988 for information.

All proceeds of this holiday event directly benefit the operations and mission of Mass Hort, a 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit organization.

Please Give to the Annual Fund

The Gardens at Elm Bank are a gateway to health, learning, and environmental stewardship for adults and children.

If you have not made a gift to our Annual Fund this year, please consider doing so today. Your donation, regardless of the amount, helps us grow!

**Support Mass
Hort!**

Consider the Living Christmas Tree

*By R. Wayne Mezitt,
Mass Hort Trustee Chairman*

Most people think of only two choices for a Christmas tree – real, freshly-cut (often called a “live” tree), or artificial (“permanent”). Each offers advantages depending upon personal preferences: aroma, touch, appearance, budget, time considerations and of course, tradition. Selecting (or even cutting) the tree



can be a highlight of the season, especially for young children. Alternatively, simply retrieving the artificial type from the closet or setting-up a pre-decorated one may be more practical for some.

But a third (and more sustainable!) option may make sense for some families -- an actual **Living Christmas Tree**: it continues to grow and add value around your home, maturing to an enduring, growing commemoration of this season. In addition to their freshly-cut trees, garden centers often offer a selection of living trees, still growing with their roots

contained in a large pot or burlap wrapping.

Your Living Tree will become a permanent feature at your home, so you'll need to take some important steps now to assure best outcomes.

1. Choose a Living Tree that you are physically able to manage and that suits your garden. You'll need to physically move it several times getting it indoors, setting it up for Christmas and bringing it to your garden;
2. Put some thought into choosing the location where your Living Tree will be planted, considering that it will grow larger as it matures;
3. Prepare the planting hole before the ground freezes solid. Fill the hole with loose leaves or hay to keep it from freezing. Store the extra soil you remove where it will stay unfrozen until you are ready to plant. For larger trees, pound stakes into the ground now to hold guy-wires for stabilizing the top.

Unfrozen or minimally-frozen ground greatly facilitates the preparation of a site for your tree. Once you dig the planting hole, you can use it to store your Living Tree until it's time to bring it indoors; it can also be held in your unheated garage if that's more convenient. Its roots should be thawed when you bring it into your home. To help assure it maintains its winter dormancy, choose the coolest possible location to set it up and minimize its time indoors – seven to ten days should be the maximum for most Living Trees if your indoor temperatures are above 65°F. And be sure to maintain even-moisture around the roots until it is planted in the ground.

Plant your Living Tree into the ground immediately when you take it out of the house, even if the temperature is below freezing; if the weather is truly miserable, you can hold it for a few days in a cool location. Follow normal planting guidelines (available at the garden center where you purchased), and immediately water-in thoroughly. Add bark or wood-chip mulch about 6" deep around the base where the soil was disturbed. Stabilizing the top with a stake or guy-wires helps reduce sway and enables the roots become well established. Next April be sure to pull back all but 1-2" of mulch from around the trunk, making sure the root crown is open to the air.

Ask the experts at your local garden center if you want more detailed information. This might be the ideal Christmas to consider this third alternative and start a tradition that your family will enjoy for years to come!

*R. Wayne Mezitt is a third generation nurseryman and a **Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist** now chairman of **Weston Nurseries of Hopkinton and Chelmsford, MA** and owner of "**Hort-Sense**", a horticultural advisory business. Wayne currently serves as Trustee chairman for Massachusetts Horticultural Society.*

Every Garden at Elm Bank Serves a Purpose

*By Hannah Traggis,
Senior Horticulturist*

The vegetable garden is the physical manifestation of our Seed to Table program. It demonstrates a food production system that is managed with low-input, agro-ecological, and

organic principles. The garden is over 4,000 square feet and it is a versatile teaching space that also provides produce to community food pantries.

We start in the late fall, preparing seeds harvested during the summer and planning for next year's growing season. We continue working through the winter in the greenhouse, and begin outdoor planting long before any of the other gardens have even begun to wake up.



For the past three years, we have focused on extending our growing and harvesting season, pushing the limitations of early spring and late fall weather. We use a variety of tried-and-true as well as new and experimental gardening methods. Prior to this year, we have been able to provide nearly 4,000 pounds of fresh, organically-grown produce to local food pantries. This year, we knew we could do better and set our goal at 5,000 pounds.

With some renovation to the garden infrastructure, we exceeded that goal - delivering 5,363 pounds of produce to both the Wellesley Food Pantry and the Natick Service Council! And, we know we can improve on that for next year.

While garden output is often measured by its weight, it is really the quality and cultural relevance of the food that matters most. We work closely with both food pantries and gain an understanding of their clientele. Armed with this knowledge, 5,000-6,000 seedlings, representing over 750 different varieties of food plants, make their way into the ground in successive plantings throughout the summer.

The vegetable garden is an enormous undertaking made possible by our incredible volunteers working through the spring cold and damp, the summer's hot and dry, and the finicky fall ups and downs.

While food production is a high priority, the primary objective of this garden is education - education about growing plants and their ecology, as well as our place as humans in a vibrant local food system. The garden provides a forgiving, hands-on outdoor classroom where folks learn to handle plants from seed starting to winter cleanup, and every step in between.

We offer topic-specific workshops and volunteer sessions where folks work closely with staff and garden stewards. We show how food can be grown in your own back yard ranging from raised gardens boxed in beds, to farm-style long rows. In 2019, we will be creating an in-ground food garden that will demonstrate ways to incorporate food plants into your broader home landscape.

As a horticulturist, the garden provides a daily challenge where the results of best practices in cultivation pay off quickly.

As an educator, it is rewarding to see our garden work turn into a beautiful meal.

To learn more about the Seed to Table program, watch the [course catalog](#) for workshops, or join us as a volunteer.

Support Us with a Smile... AmazonSmile

This holiday season, when you shop with AmazonSmile, Amazon gives to Massachusetts Horticultural Society! Just go to smile.amazon.com and select Massachusetts Horticultural Society as your organization to support!

Amazon will donate a portion of your purchases to Mass Hort whenever you shop on AmazonSmile!

The Mass Hort staff has created a [Wish List](#).
All items can be found on Amazon and start at less than \$5.



Please email Elaine at elawrence@masshort.org or give her a call at 617-933-4945 with questions.

Upcoming Education Programs



We have a lot of classes coming up, many which start in the new year. We hope you can join us or consider gifting a class registration to family or friends.

Since publishing our Fall and Winter [Calendar & Courses](#), we have added two classes: [Landscaping and Planting Design](#) and [Dripped Wax Resist with Watercolor Painting](#).

Digital Photography: Capturing Botanic Images

Thursday, December 13, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

We have a few spaces left in this popular class! Join Melissa Pace, garden educator, artist, and photographer, for a workshop to help you manage important elements of photography: line, texture, shape, space, and color. Understanding how to use them will add “wow” to your garden photography. The program is ideal for novice photographers as they use tablets, phones, and basic cameras. Learn key elements in the classroom and take a few walks to practice in the gardens. [Please register here.](#)
\$75/member, \$110/general admission

Botany for the Home Gardener

Tuesdays, January 8 – February 12, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

In this six-session course, join our Senior Horticulturist, Hannah Traggis, to explore the fundamentals of plant structures and their function, reproductive biology, and classification of major plant groups within the plant kingdom. Participants will better understand the world of plants and gain an appreciation for their wonder and practical gardening connections. [Register Today!](#)
\$150/members, \$200/general admission

Landscape Planting and Design

Thursdays, January 10 - January 31, 7 - 9 p.m.

Instructor Warren Leach, Landscape Horticulturist, will focus on fundamental principles of design used in creating landscapes and garden spaces and composing planting designs using a complement of woody and herbaceous plants. [Register here.](#)
\$125/members, \$160/general admission

Designing the Winter Landscape

Wednesdays, January 16 and 23, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Maria von Brincken will help you design an outdoor space that uses texture, color, and mass planting to create visual interest throughout the winter and as a backdrop for seasonal perennial flowering. Maria will introduce you to layout and plant lists to create perennial combinations and color palettes that will inspire your garden planning through these cold months. **Pre-registration required, [please register here!](#)**

\$135/members, \$175/general admission

Potager Gardens

Thursday, January 17, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Discover the different elements of the Potager garden that can be applied to your garden or even container plantings! Instructor and designer Betsy Grecoe will lead you through the process of creating your own Potager garden or containers, and each attendee will leave with a design of their

own. [Sign up here.](#)
\$12 members/ \$20 general admission

Artists of New England and their Gardens

Thursday, January 24, 1 – 5 p.m.

Gardens are a space for creative rejuvenation, muse, and inspiration. New England is rich with historical artists, poets, and writers, and we are lucky to have not only their work but also the gardens that held a special place in their lives. Join us for an afternoon of presentations exploring these truly inspired settings. [Please register today, here.](#)
\$40 members/\$60 general admission

Seasonal Selections

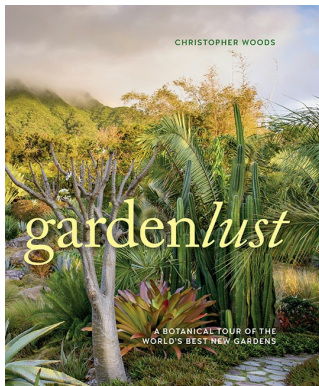
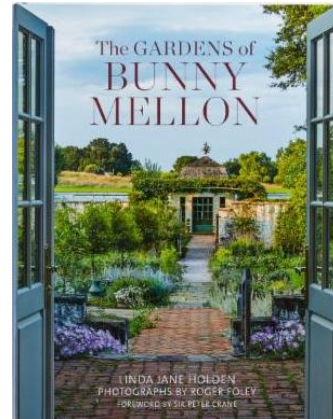
Reviewed by Patrice Todisco

Whether by the numbers or through deeply personal journeys explore plants, gardens and landscapes with these holiday selections.

The Gardens of Bunny Mellon by Jane Holden with photographs by Roger Foley

Vendome Press, New York - London: 2018

Beautifully designed and lavishly illustrated, this is the first book to focus on the public and private gardens designed by the late Rachel "Bunny" Mellon. A passionate gardener without formal training, she designed some of the most iconic gardens in the world, including the Rose Garden and East Garden at the White House, the gardens of close friend, Hubert de Givenchy and the restoration of Louis XIV's kitchen garden at Versailles. Specially commissioned photographs of Mellon's gardens, farm and horticultural library at Oak Spring (now the home of the Oak Spring Garden Foundation) complement archival images, garden plans, sketches and watercolor drawings. The text, based on extensive interviews with Mrs. Mellon and the gardeners she worked with, provides an intimate portrait of her creative process, bearing witness to her horticultural legacy, impeccable good taste and ability "to find the miraculous in the common."



Gardenlust: A Botanical Tour of the World's Best New Gardens by Christopher Woods

Timber Press, Portland, Oregon: 2018

"The life of the world is a joy and treasure if you have eyes to see it," opines Christopher Woods in his introduction to *Garden Lust: A Botanical Tour of the World's Best Gardens*. Woods, the former director and chief designer of Chanticleer Garden, proves an enthusiastic guide in what is best described as a global "quest" to explore the 50 public and private modern (created in the past two decades) gardens from throughout the world. Told in the form of garden stories, each entry, which can be read as an independent essay, profiles both a garden and its designers, or in Wood's words, those who "have dared to create beauty." Full-color photographs accompany each entry making this love letter to the planet a visual treat.

City Green: Public Gardens of New York by Jane Garmey with photographs by Nick Hales

The Monacelli Press, New York: 2018

Intrigued by an assignment for the *Wall Street Journal* to write about the reclamation of the Battery in lower Manhattan, journalist Jane Garmey set out to learn about the history and challenges of other public gardens in New York City. The result, *City Green: Public Gardens of New York* is a selective survey of twenty-five such spaces located throughout the five boroughs of the city. Portrayed in all their idiosyncratic glory, these are not the signature, touristic parks known by one and all, but instead hidden gems of varied size



and function whose very existence is the result of passionate efforts by individual citizens and visionary gardeners. Evocative photographs by Mick Hales accompany the text, bringing to life the surprising discovery of these urban sanctuaries.



100 Years 100 Landscape Designs by John Hill

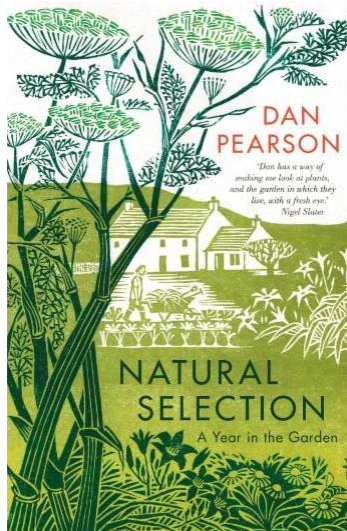
Pretel, Munich, London, New York: 2017

In this international survey of what is deemed the most influential landscape design projects built between 1917 to 2016, John Hill seeks to redefine what a landscape is and can be. Showcasing publicly accessible parks, gardens, promenades, river walks, botanical gardens, cemeteries, memorials, bridges and museums, this is a global perspective that provides insight into the manner in which landscape design has evolved during the past century. Described as a "must-see list" for landscape enthusiasts, this well-designed book features double-page spreads with color images paired with text describing each site.

Flora: Inside the Secret World of Plants

DK Publishing, New York: 2018

Published in association with Smithsonian Gardens and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, this big, bold and beautiful book reveals the inner workings of the plant kingdom. Exploring the art and science of plants through exquisite full-color photographs, botanical illustrations and easy to read diagrams, *Flora* is divided into seven chapters, each examining a different plant part and how it relates to the world around it. From the familiar to the exotic, the diversity, mystery and history of the plant kingdom is revealed; inspirational qualities are detailed through individual entries on plants in art. A catalogue of more than 70 significant plant families and a full list of all of the families in the plant kingdom concludes *Flora*, serving as a field guide for future exploration.



Natural Selection: A Year in the Garden by Dan Pearson

Guardian Books, London: 2017

In this compilation of ten years of gardening columns written by British landscape and garden designer Dan Pearson, one is gently led through the seasons as each month unfolds through a series of thoughtfully composed essays. Within its pages, Pearson, one of the most influential garden designers working today, shares his horticultural expertise and deep appreciation for the natural world and the role that landscape plays in creating a sense of place. Beautifully designed and printed in deep green ink with illustrations by Claire Melinsky, this is a book that is both aspirational and inspirational. It can be read over and over again. "Autumn has a tidal pull that touches everything in its path; it can make you feel very small and insignificant," writes Dan. "Best to stand back, not worry about the leaves on the lawn, and just enjoy the moment." Whether you have succeeded or not in this rather odd year in removing the leaves from your lawn and garden

(I have not) you can find solace in Dan's thoughtful evocations.

Among Trees: A Guided Journal for Forest Bathing

Timber Press, Portland Oregon: 2018

Should you seek quietude in this season of excess, this personal guide introduces you to shinrin-yoku, the Japanese practice of forest bathing. The benefits of spending time in nature are increasingly recognized as an antidote to the stresses of modern life providing tangible improvements to overall health. In this elegantly constructed book, seasonal lessons designed to connect readers with the natural world are paired with an excursion log in which to record observations. Once mastered, the principles of shinrin-yoku can be practiced virtually anywhere and within any time frame, offering the opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation.

Patrice Todisco writes about parks and gardens at the award-winning blog, [Landscape Notes](#).



among TREES a guided journal for
OBSERVATIONS & INSPIRATIONS forest bathing



2018 Volunteer Wrap Up

*By Amy Rodrigues,
Volunteer Engagement Manager*

Mass Hort enjoyed tremendous support from key volunteers and many new volunteers this past year! Over 800 volunteers helped in the gardens, office, Library, Visitors' Center, with educational programs, and at our special events. As we look back on this past year, we want to sincerely thank all of the volunteers whose contributions helped us achieve our mission!



Every volunteer role is essential. Our office volunteers lent their time and organizational skills to support our staff with mission-critical projects. Volunteers also promoted garden education to all ages at our programs and with the Plantmobile (showing children how to plant seedlings and teaching the importance of pollinators). And our Library now has a strong corps of eight volunteers who worked nearly 1,000 hours. These volunteers open the Library for increased public hours and help achieve significant accomplishments with collections and administration.

Volunteers helped connect many visitors and members to The Gardens at Elm Bank. They helped in our Visitors Center and led tours to share the rich history of the Elm Bank estate and the splendor of our gardens. Special events crews helped us welcome guests, implement activities (including a stellar harvest tasting at Goddesses in the Gardens), and connect with the public at Paragon's Boston Flower and Garden Show, our on-site summer events, and the Festival of Trees. Our talented volunteer photographers, Alison Borrelli and Brooks Payne, captured all of the fun to help us promote our programs with their professional images.

This summer, the gardens never looked so beautiful thanks to the care of hundreds of garden volunteers. Volunteers of all experience levels learned about garden maintenance and plant propagation as they helped us care for sixteen acres of cultivated land. The help of dedicated garden stewards and all the garden volunteers refurbished garden spaces, provided produce to food pantries, and engage children and families inspiring their senses, and connecting them to the natural world.

We continue to enjoy vital support from skilled volunteers from the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association. Master gardeners provided over 2700 hours of their time to Mass Hort this past year. Twenty Master Gardeners served as Garden Stewards, individuals who oversee maintenance projects and volunteers for a specific garden. They worked tirelessly every week, in extreme weather, to keep the gardens beautiful and share their skills, knowledge and passion with the public. Master Gardeners also answered questions on the Help Line and at 'Ask a Master Gardener' booths at our events, worked in our greenhouses, and talked horticulture at our flower show exhibit. Our shared missions - to educate the public about plants and the environment – make for a dynamic partnership.

Stewards also helped us welcome additional help from over 40 new garden volunteers recruited from the general public. Teenagers and retirees alike met to get their hands dirty, learn about plants, and beautify their environment. We teamed up with over 120 volunteers from corporate groups, schools and other community groups for group volunteer days in the gardens. All of our garden volunteers enjoyed the physical and emotional benefits of connecting with nature, found camaraderie, met new people with shared interests, and learned new skills, all while helping us to achieve our mission.

Lastly, our organization benefited greatly from the vast experience and knowledge shared by the volunteers on our Board of Trustees, Board of Overseers, and committees.

Volunteers continue to be one of Mass Hort's greatest resources. We are truly grateful for this critical donor support. We look forward to offering meaningful and rewarding volunteer opportunities and cultivating lasting committed relationships with all of our volunteers.

If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Amy Rodrigues, at arodrigues@masshort.org or check out our current volunteer opportunities here. We'd love to welcome you to our volunteer community!

From the Stacks:

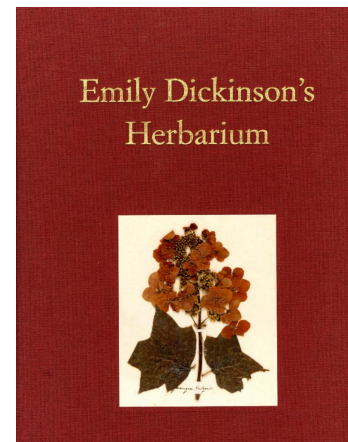
By Maureen T. O'Brien,
Library Manager

"A herbarium is better than any illustration; every botanist should make one."

- Carolus Linnaeus

A herbarium is a collection of preserved plant specimens and associated data used for scientific study. Herbaria provide valuable documentation and resources for researchers, educators and the public beyond what was originally envisioned by their creators. Today, technology makes specimen data and images easily accessible, thus creating research efficiency and reducing costs. New uses for older specimens such as tracking the spread and habitats of plants, plant phylogeny and other studies continue to be developed. One intriguing use of herbaria today involves the effect of climate change and [insect activity on plants](#).

The Library has examples of 19th century herbaria, often accompanied by corresponding illustrations by the collector of the plants. The Society's Collection includes binders focusing on the 'Botany of the Back Bay,' boxes of seeds with corresponding teaching aids, books and other items.



Featured Book

Collecting and recording plants in a herbarium was a popular endeavor during Victorian times. One such collector was the beloved poet, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886.) The Library has a beautiful slip cased volume of *Emily Dickinson's Herbarium: A Facsimile Edition* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.) Dickinson, an expert gardener, often included references to the natural world in her poetry. This book gives the observer a glimpse into Dickinson's avocation and inspiration.

Dickinson's original herbarium from the 1840's is in such fragile condition that it is stored in a vault in Harvard's Houghton Library. The herbarium contains 424 specimens arranged on 66 leaves, delicately attached with small strips of paper that identify most specimens with the scientific name.^[1] The specimens include native plants, plants naturalized to Western Massachusetts, where Dickinson lived, and houseplants. The book is complemented with a Foreword by Leslie A. Morris that tells the provocative story of how Dickinson's [Collection](#), including the herbarium, came to Harvard. The Preface by Dickinson scholar [Judith Farr](#), discusses the herbarium and plants in context with Dickinson's poetry. Richard B. Sewall, a Dickinson biographer, fleshes out the link between Dickinson's love of nature and her poetry.

You may view Dickinson's herbarium online [here](#). Zoom in to see Dickinson's lovely handwriting labeling each specimen. While a bit clumsy to navigate, the online [Emily Dickinson Archive](#) includes high resolution images from Dickinson's manuscripts from institutions all over the United States.

Emily Dickinson will be one of the featured artists at "Artists of New England and Their Gardens Symposium" on January 24, 2019. For more information click [here](#).

In the Windows – *Carolers* and holiday themed books on traditions and crafts.

Our Collections are Growing...

Since its inception in 1829, the Library relied on the generosity of its members to build its Collections. This month, we thank Caroline Whitney for her donation of historic field guides, horticulture, history and other books to the Library. Want to give back this holiday season and love books? Consider donating a book or two from the Society's Amazon [Wish List](#).

Come Visit the Library...

The Library is open on Thursdays from 9 am to 1 pm, at other times by chance or appointment. Before you venture over, we suggest you email mobrien@masshort.org or call 617-933-4912 on days the Library is not scheduled to be open. A benefit of Society membership allows members to borrow our most of our recent books.

Image: Slip case for *Emily Dickinson's Herbarium: A Facsimile Edition*.

[1] Fourteen year old Dickinson mislabeled some specimens. The correct or missing names are noted in brackets on the face pages of the book and in the back in the Catalog of Plant Specimens.



A Plague of Turkeys

*By Neal Sanders,
Leaflet Contributor*

I have spent an inordinate amount of time this fall staring out my back windows. I admit it is an attractive view: viburnum and blueberry in all their autumnal glory just beyond the panes; with oaks, maples and pine as a backdrop. There are feeders with overwintering cardinals, jays, finches and chickadees.

But my eyes have no time for enjoyment of nature. I am on constant vigil for an insidious, marauding rafter of turkeys.



This spring there were two adults with a dozen poults. The turkeys stayed to themselves in the wetlands and Betty and I gardened with nary a thought of them. We watched the young grow and assumed they would search out territory elsewhere in town.

Then, in September, the turkeys – now numbering roughly twenty – discovered the bounty that is our garden. They would lurk among the fallen trees until they thought the coast was clear, then come up in pairs to dine on astilbe and tiarellas. We would see them, chase them, and they would retreat to the safety of the wetlands.

Something changed in early October: the turkeys multiplied and grew bolder. They appeared in groups of two dozen and sometimes more. One moment the garden was serene. The next, it was a mass of enormous birds scratching and pecking at everything in sight. They would pull small plants out of the ground for no apparent reason (unless it was to see if they could), sniff them, and move onto the next one.

We took to keeping a box of rocks by our garage door. Upon seeing the first turkeys, I would gather a handful and charge out the door like a madman, hurling stones in every direction. The turkeys would look up from their feast and judge – accurately as it turns out – I had a lousy aim. I would wave my arms and scream, which would annoy them sufficiently that they waddled down the hill and to the edge of the wetlands. If I did *not* continue chasing them, they merely waited until I had gone indoors. They would then promptly return to the garden and I would repeat the process.

It got worse in November and Betty and I escalated to keeping a metal garbage can lid and a trowel at close hand. Several times a day I would run out banging my makeshift cymbal and screaming something that could be reasonably mistaken for a high school production of an aria from *Der Rheingold*. The birds would divide; one half going north and the other south. I would chase the first half to the very edge of the muck as they retreated to the brook at the rear of our property. Betty would simultaneously attack the balance of the herd with such vigor that they would actually take flight across the stream.

Apparently nothing, though, can actually persuade them our garden is off limits; and the two nights of single-digit temperatures did nothing to thin their numbers. Incapable of learning or remembering, they return, emboldened, to pull up more plants. If they weren't so destructive it might be humorous. And so I am resigned to spending the winter with a set of old boots, a trowel, and a garbage can lid by the garage door. Maybe as we gain a snow cover, the turkeys will lose interest. I'm not counting on it. I'm laying in a supply of rocks.

*Neal Sanders is the author of twelve mysteries, most with horticultural themes. His latest, **Fatal Equity**, was published in March and is available at Amazon and at bookstores. You can read more of Neal's writing at www.thehardingtonpress.com.*

Are You a Mass Hort Enthusiast Over Age 70½ with an IRA?

You can support The Gardens at Elm Bank in a tax-wise way!

When thinking about your year-end giving, please consider the IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). Congress has made the IRA QCD permanent and you can make a thoughtful contribution to Mass Hort, satisfy your required minimum distribution (RMD), and avoid income tax you would otherwise have to pay on mandatory withdrawals.



The IRA QCD provides you with an excellent opportunity to make a gift during your lifetime from an asset that would be subject to multiple levels of taxation if it remained in your taxable estate.

What you need to know:

- The donor must be over age 70½
- The gift (up to \$100,000) must be transferred directly from the IRA account by the IRA custodian to Mass Hort.
- The IRA custodian will have an easy-to-complete form to facilitate the distribution.
- For gifts to be counted toward the 2018 required minimum distribution (RMD), transfers must be made by December 31, 2018.

The advantages:

- You can count your gift towards your annual required minimum distribution.
- Under current tax laws, keeping your IRA distribution out of your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) may save you federal and state taxes.
- Your Medicare Part B and D premiums are affected by your AGI. The QCD will reduce your AGI, which could lower your Medicare premiums.
- The transfer process is quick and requires minimal paperwork.

Additional information and sample letters to facilitate this tax-wise way to support Massachusetts

Elaine Lawrence
Director of Development
Massachusetts Horticultural Society
900 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482
617-933-4945



December Horticultural Hints

*by Betty Sanders,
Lifetime Master Gardener*

If you haven't already, mulch your perennials and newly planted bulbs and protect young trees from hungry rodents. Place a mulch of pine needles, chopped leaves, or wood chips to prevent heaving of plants out of the soil during alternating freeze and thaw cycles. Wrapping the stems of young trees to a height of two to three feet with small mesh wire or plastic trunk guards will protect trees from gnawing damage by mice, moles and other vermin.

Act now to protect your shrubs from winter storms. To avoid wind- or snow-caused broken branches on evergreens and shrubs, tie up the branches with rope or mesh fencing. Burlap wind breaks can provide important protection for boxwood and broad-leafed evergreens such as rhododendrons and azaleas. While you may see others doing so, resist the temptation to tightly wrap trees or shrubs with burlap. Burlap provides good shelter for rodents and other animals while preventing the plant from receiving sunlight throughout the winter.



It's also time to start regular sprayings of shrubs and small trees with vile-smelling solutions such as Bobbex and Deer Off to prevent browsing of tender tips by hungry deer. You'll need to keep up that regimen monthly throughout the winter to be effective.

If you use cut evergreen branches for holiday decorating, don't throw them away when the season is over. In January, the branches can provide protection for low growing plants that might otherwise be crushed or broken by snow. Also, when putting up (and taking down) outdoor Christmas lights on trees and shrubs, take care not to break off the buds that will be next spring's flowers.

Houseplants need regular misting during winter months to prevent damage from the dry air in our homes. Or you can place pots on saucers or trays with a layer of stone. If the stones are kept wet, the evaporating water will add humidity without risking root rot in your plants.

December is also the time to plant seeds for hardy annuals such as cleome, bachelor buttons, snapdragons, snow on the mountain and, for next year's monarch butterflies, milkweed.

Finally, choose a cold, damp day to finish cleaning and oiling all your wood and metal tools and sharpen pruners so they are ready to get to work next spring.

Betty Sanders is a widely known speaker and writer on gardening topics. You can read more of her horticultural advice at www.BettyOnGardening.com

Artists of New England & their Gardens

Thursday, January 24, 1 - 5 p.m.

Spend a winter's day learning about truly inspired gardens. Join us for an afternoon symposium curated by landscape writer and historian, and *Leaflet* book reviewer, Patrice Todisco.

Our presenters will lead an exploration of how gardens are places of creative rejuvenation, muse, and inspiration. New England is rich with historical artists, poets and writers, and we are lucky to have not only their work but also the gardens that held a special place in their lives.



Announcing Our Three Presentations:

Michael Medeiros, formerly of the Emily Dickinson Museum
"Amherst has Gone to Eden"

Marie Nickerson, Celia Thaxter's Garden Steward
"Summers for Celia: Then & Again"

&

Anne Schuyler, The Mount's Director of Visitor Services
"A Genius for Gardens: Edith Wharton & The Mount"

[We hope you can join us, sign up here!](#)

Connect with us



www.MassHort.org - 617-933-4900