



Nature's Inspiration

*by Wayne Mezitt
MHS Trustee Chair*

Being confined to home these past weeks has created an opportunity to put my thoughts about society in general, and horticulture in particular, into perspective. So much of our normal daily routines involve direct personal interaction with other people; close-up interactions seem to be a fundamental societal need for many of us, as individuals, to prosper. Now deprived of these familiar relationships, we might retreat into isolation, perhaps becoming anxious, frustrated, worried and depressed by factors over which we have no control.

Our relationship with nature and horticulture is different. We can certainly interact with other people and compare our gardening experiences, but dealing with nature is fundamentally a one-on-one personal relationship, communing with a force greater than ourselves. For me this is cause for optimism. Despite the current enforced societal setbacks, all the trees, shrubs, plants and food items we continue to grow and enjoy around our homes create inspiration for the future.

This health crisis has the potential to profoundly change the way we live our lives, even for the long term. It affords us the opportunity to evaluate what we do and why we do it. And to rank the importance of what we value.

For those of us whose lives center around horticulture and living plants, this period of social isolation need not be a significant impediment. Lots of group meetings are now being offered as “virtual” and online, and most of us are still available by phone/email.

Looking around, we see the inexorable progression of seasonal change week by week (even though the day to day weather can be erratic!). I’m encouraged to feel the inspiring sense of anticipation and hope, evidenced by nature’s constant, dependable changes, as spring emerges.

Even being isolated, we’re still able to plant vegetable seeds, maintain our gardens, install new trees & shrubs and accomplish chores like pruning and mulching, planning for all those upcoming activities later in the year. So much of what we do in the outdoors invigorates us and enhances our physical health. And the results of our gardening efforts continue to be gratifying as we watch them develop.

When we look back over this period in our lives, perhaps we will have learned more about what’s truly important to each of us. Nature functions on its own schedule; we can all benefit by taking the time to observe, listen and appreciate all the essential life-lessons it teaches.

Wayne Mezitt is a 3rd 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; he currently serves as Trustee chairman for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society at [The Gardens of Elm Bank](#) in Wellesley MA.

A Rabbit Hole of Learning

by Allison Dush

Director of Programs & Education

While I would love to write about fun, upcoming programming or garden updates, like the rest of the world I've had to change my normal routine.

Lately I've been working on providing our members with alternative ways to learn and explore while staying safe. If you saw our "Weekly" newsletter last week you noticed it listed programs and activities for adults and little horticulturists alike to complete from the comfort of home. Things to keep you busy and help make the time pass a little faster.

In sticking with this direction I'd like to share a topic of study that has recently sent me down a rabbit hole of learning. If you're looking to wrap your brain around a whole new topic might I suggest the colorful fungi/alga mixtures known as lichens!

It all started with a magazine article on the topic and resulted in hours of identifying the colorful patches on the trees and rocks that decorate my backyard. I knew of lichens but never dove into the biology behind them. Click on the photo to the right to read the article that spiked my curiosity. (Can you guess my home state from reading it?)



Other great resources for exploring include the U.S. Forest Service & iNaturalist. The Forest Service provides a great guide that includes many color photos and fun facts about these tiny wonders. And as always, iNaturalist is there to help with identification or to show you what you may find in your own backyard. I encourage you (or challenge you) to walk a little slower on your next outing, do you actually see ALL the lichens living around you?

Click on the logos below to check out their resources



April Horticultural Hints

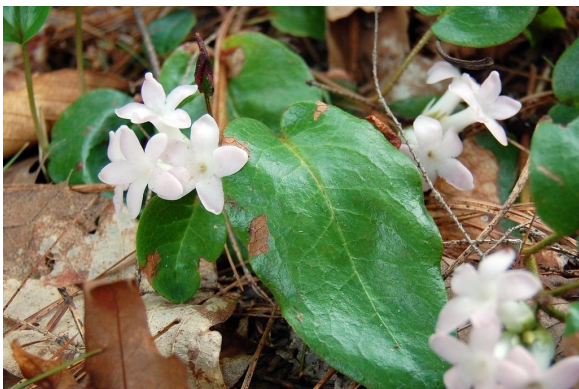
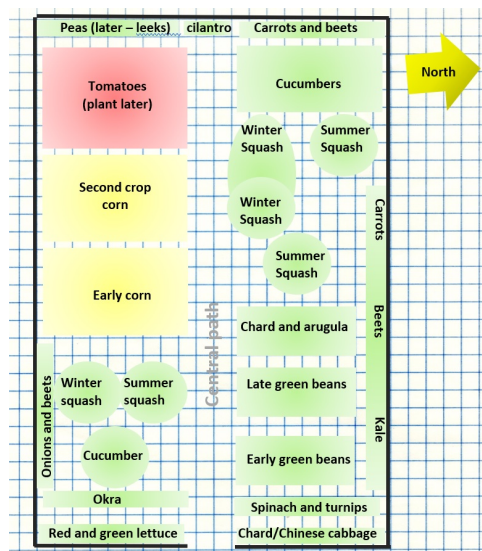
by Betty Sanders

Lifetime Master Gardener



If you have nurseries where you usually shop, help them out by buying gift cards now. The nurseries will benefit from the cash flow and you will be greeted warmly when you go in to pick out your plants when they open for business. While many nurseries are open now, not all of them may be following the guidelines on social distancing as much as you might be comfortable with. Call and ask before making the trip!

Is it still too cold to garden, or do coronavirus concerns have you stuck inside? Watch the videos offered by Grow Native Massachusetts. For several years they have brought in experts on native plants such as Doug Tallamay, Larry Weaner, Claudia West, and Bill Cullina to speak at the Cambridge Library. Videos from these lectures are available (free!) on their website. Learn in the comfort and safety of your home. And you can always order their books online if you are hungry for more.



It's easy to keep a safe six feet distance in your yard and garden, so get out there when the weather allows. Clean up your dead leaves, remove dead stalks from perennials that you left up to benefit birds – or because winter got here before you finished the fall clean-up.

Ready your vegetable garden for spring! Repair any fence issues caused by winter damage.

If you haven't already done so, order seeds by phone or computer. Lay out your vegetable beds on paper to save time when the soil is ready to plant. This month, you can plant your 'cold weather' crops, including spinach, peas and beets.

Finding very little to admire in the yard right now? Go hunting for some Mayflower plant aka Trailing Arbutus. It is a low, shrubby plant that blooms early to mid spring with pink or white flowers. Each flower is male or female but you'll need a hand lens to tell them apart. And don't try to transplant it to your home woods – it doesn't transplant. That trait is notable because it got the name Mayflower from some of those just off that boat! Plan additions and alterations to your home garden. Remember what you didn't love last year? Put some time into finding solutions. Nurseries and their staffs, normally hard to reach at this time of year, are much more likely to be available on the phone or on line this year.

To see more of Betty's horticultural advice, you're welcome to visit [BettyOnGardening.com](https://www.bettyongardening.com).



An Ogre's Work Is Never Done

by Neal Sanders
Leaflet contributor

March 2020 may go down as the month that gardening saved my sanity.

A month that began with such promise went sideways with a speed and whip-lash-inducing severity that, in my memory, is unprecedented. No, I didn't test positive for Covid-19; but more than a dozen speaking engagements as close as my town library and as far away as South Carolina evaporated out of 'an abundance of caution'. I confess to having fallen into a funk that no amount of binge-watching *Cheers* reruns could cure.

Ten days into the month, Betty appeared in the bedroom that serves as my office (where I was, of course, immersing myself in contagion statistics). She had a rake in her hand. "Stand up, Mister Gloom and Doom," she said. "I would like you to help me clean up the garden."

Betty had the kind of look on her face that said the use of the words, 'would like', was not intended to be taken at face value. This was a *command*, and was to be obeyed *now*.

I rose from my chair and, for the next three days, we pulled a winter's worth of leaves out from under shrubs. I mended a stone wall. We cut back the four inch stubble on perennials, and carefully trimmed out broken branches. And, along the way, I found *dicentra* already leafing out; awaiting only the removal of six inches of oak leaves to start on their early spring flowering. Daffodil greens were three inches high and, where there was bright sunlight, heads were forming.

I removed a mulch of pine needles and discovered a small forest of greens that meant the winter aconite bulbs we planted in October were going to bloom. Off our patio, a clutch of hellebores had probably been in bloom since February, but were under so many leaves, I had forgotten they were there. When I carefully pulled off leaves and pine needles by hand, I found myself with a pink and white reward. Those small signs lifted my spirits more than I can express in words.



It was not all 'rake and discover'. Cleaning the garden also meant hours on my knees pulling out thousands of inchtall pine seedlings and a nasty green weed with world domination hardwired into its DNA.

Then, the sun warmed the soil and, a week later, miracle of miracles, we had crocus by the hundreds. My spirits had done a 180. I was looking *forward* to working in the garden.

On a Friday toward the end of the



month – when the temperature rose into the mid-40s and no rain was in the forecast - we gathered a group of intrepid volunteers and put down 220 stakes to mark our town's Community Garden. The next day, we put up our fence – or at least tried to. A cold, nasty wind whipped up and drove us indoors. But we will be back out. We have to: the garlic is already three or four inches high and will be fodder for deer if we

don't protect it.

Perhaps the rejuvenation of my spirits has some kind of cosmic, Karma-like reverberation. One morning in late March, an email appeared in my inbox. The garden club convention in Missouri I was to speak to in early May was one of the first to cancel the event at the beginning of March. But they were now planning their 2021 event. Everyone had been looking forward to my talk. Might I be available the first week of May a year from now?

Of course I could; and I wrote them back immediately. No sooner that that email was posted, my phone rang. The group in Illinois was cancelling my talk, also scheduled for May, but was anxious to know if I could be rebooked for the same date in 2021.

I write this looking out my office window. A few weeks ago, I saw only missed opportunities I thought would never come again, and contagion as far as the eye could see. Now, I focus on the mass of yellow, white and blue crocuses and aconite. And I know we will all get through this.

Neal Sanders' 14th mystery, 'A Murder on the Garden Tour', has just been published. You can find it and his other books on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and in bookstores.

The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants

by Jennifer Jewell:
Timber Press, 2020

Reviewed by Patrice Todisco

Should you be looking for inspiration in these challenging times, it can be found in the stories of the women profiled in *The Earth in her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants* by Jennifer Jewell. These are women who are reshaping the horticultural landscape with their creative and communal spirit. They are building upon the rich history of the women who came before them and forging a path for those to come.



For many years, women's contributions to horticulture and its allied fields has been underrepresented, a footnote in the history books. Yet, these contributions have been profound, anchored in the need to create physical space and integrate green and growing things into their lives and the lives of others. Jewell likens this communal expression of passion and connectivity "akin to mapping mycelia pathways

between collaborating organisms in the soil of the forest."



These women are extraordinary, indeed. Their diverse stories transcend boundaries of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation and age. Compiled as an exuberant, textured collection of individual profiles, each includes an introduction to their work, plant, plant journey and the other women who inspired and continue to inspire them. *The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants* provides a welcome addition to the ongoing exploration of women making their lives with plants and broadening the field of plant knowledge and practice.

Weekly public radio program and podcast *Cultivating Place: Conversations on Natural History & the Human Impulse to*

Garden, knows best - US, England, Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, India and Japan. Their innovative work is ongoing and broadly relates to horticulture in all its iterations including botany, environmental science, landscape design/architecture, flora culture, agriculture, social justice, plant hunting and breeding, seed science, gardening, garden writing, garden photography, public garden administration, research and public policy.



Ira Wallace, founding owner and worker of the sixty-acre Acorn Community Farm in Charlottesville, Virginia grew up gardening with her grandmother in Tampa, Florida. Ceramic artist and potter, Frances Palmer of Weston, Connecticut grows up to 50 varieties of dahlias and teaches at the New York Botanical Garden. Midori Shintani is the head gardener of the Tokachi, Millennium Forest in Hokkaido, Japan. Jinny Blom is a British garden designer and writer with an international clientele. Australian Georgina Reid is the editor and founder of *The Planthunter*, an online magazine. Renee Shepherd is a nurserywoman and the founder and owner of the web-based, Renee's Garden.



Each comes from wildly different worlds and perspectives, but they are bound together by their passionate embrace of and advocacy for plants.

While Jewell acknowledges that, "there is no telling the whole story of women making their lives with plants or of women broadening the field of plant knowledge and practice" *The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants* is a welcoming reminder of the historic role that women have played in horticulture. It is also a celebration of the vibrant women forging new paths in horticulture and its allied professions today.

In the generous spirit of community which pervades Jewell's sensibilities, I thought it would be fun to share some of the books that inspired the subjects of her profiles. You may, like me, be dipping into your past to revisit some of your favorite garden writing to get you through this difficult time. Enjoy.



In no particular order: *Once Upon a Windowsill: A History of Indoor Plants*, Tovah Martinson (2009); *A Modern Herbal*, Mrs. M. Grieve (1931); *Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land*, Leah Penniman (2018); *Flourish*, Willow Crossley (2016); *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson (1962); *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden*, Eleanor Perenyi (1981/2002); *Gardening for Love*, Elizabeth Lawrence (1988); *Constance Spry Book of Flower Arranging*, Constance Spry (1985); *Planting in a Post-Wild World*, Claudia West (2015); *Garden People*, Valerie Finnis (2007); *The Apple Book*, Rosie Sanders (2010); *We Made a Garden*, Margery Fish (1956); *The Garden Primer*, Barbara Damrosch (1988); *Onward and Upward in the Garden*, Katherine White (1979); *The Dry Garden*, Beth Chatto (1995); *A Country Year: Living the Questions*, Sue Hubbell (1986); *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World*, Emma Marris (2015); *The Japanese Garden*, Sophie Walker (2017).

Photos taken from The Earth in Her Hands © Copyright 2020 by Jennifer Jewell. Published by Timber Press, Portland

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



From the Stacks:

By Maureen T. O'Brien,
Library Manager

*I trust in nature for the stable laws of beauty and utility.
Spring shall plant and autumn garner to the end of time.*

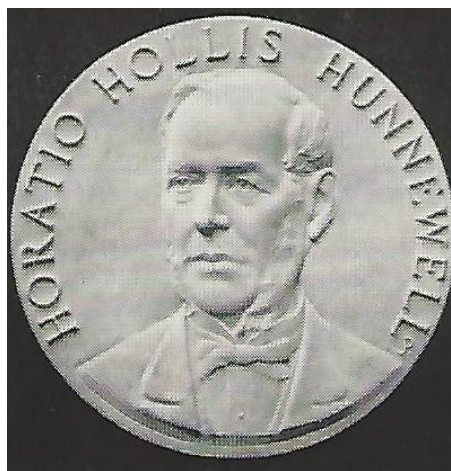
Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Here at the Library, we are working at home, safe distancing and looking forward to returning to Mass Hort soon. While doing the Spring clean-up in my garden, I was delighted to see early signs of Spring—so reliable and beautiful. Get outside, cheer yourself up and realize soon we will be getting back to a new normal with a revived appreciation of each other and our environment.

Featured Collection –Awards

One of the most frequent research questions we get at the library is about awards. We are taking advantage of quiet time to create research aids that we will be publishing on the Library's webpage so you and others can find information on who has gotten what over the years.

One of the first Awards we tackled was the Hunnewell Award. This award was established in 1865 and is awarded from time to time to an estate over 3 acres to promote the art of landscape gardening. It is administered by the Committee on Gardens (Committee.) Qualification for the award was high, thus it has been awarded only 36 times over its 150 year history, most recently in 2001. Originally referred to as the Hunnewell Triennial Premium, it has also been called the Hunnewell Prize, the Hunnewell Award, and Hunnewell Medal.



In 1850, the Committee was established to visit gardens and award prizes. The Committee was quite active in its early years, describing its visits to gardens in transactions and awarded cash prizes in the amount of \$10 to \$25. Written applications were required and a specific set of criteria was set out for visits by the Committee, including the requirement that estates must be visited three years in a row.

During the civil war years, the Society was doing well: membership and finances were increasing and it was building a new Horticultural Hall on Tremont Street. However, by the mid-1860's the Committee lamented that it had no applications for prizes and referred to themselves sardonically as the "Eating and Drinking Committee." The Committee attributed the lack of applications to the fact the Society had not funded the prizes. In 1864, the work of the Committee was revived with the gift from Horatio Hollis Hunnewell (1810-1902) of \$2000 in interest bearing bonds to the "Hunnewell Fund."

The new fund allowed the Committee to make larger prizes in the amount of \$160. In 1870, the Committee awarded its first Hunnewell Prize of \$160 to Edward S. Rand, Jr. for his estate "Glen Ridge" in Dedham. The prize remained as a \$160 cash award until 1911 when the cash prize was replaced by a Society Gold Medal paid for by the Hunnewell Fund. In 1933, an actual Hunnewell Medal was designed by John Paramino. The medal bears the likeness of Hunnewell on its face surrounded by the words "Horatio Hollis Hunnewell."

On its reverse, the inscription states the award is for "an estate showing rare skill and beauty." Like any research project it is easy to get sidetracked pursuing the story behind the story. Google some of the names and places on the list and you will find some interesting stories and a few juicy ones! Winners include horticulturists, philanthropists, business moguls, scandalous ladies and gents, will contests and

celebrities.

Massachusetts Horticultural Society H. H. Hunnewell Award 1870-2001						
 <p>In 1864, Horatio Hollis Hunnewell (1810-1902) endowed the Society's "Hunnewell Fund" for prizes "to be awarded from time to time" to owners of estates of three acres or more to promote the art of landscape gardening, regardless of whether or not professional advice was used.</p> <p>The original award was known as the Titicaca Premium and a monetary prize of \$100. Beginning in 1923, the cash premium was replaced by the Hunnewell Award and the recipient received one of the Society's Gold Medals, paid for from the Hunnewell Fund. In 1933, an actual Hunnewell Medal was designed by John Partridge. The medal bears the likeness of Hunnewell on its face surrounded by the words "Horatio Hollis Hunnewell." On its reverse there is an inscription that states the award is for "an estate showing rare skill and beauty."</p> <p>The Visiting Gardens Committee and its predecessors made the recommendations for this award. Acting on that recommendation, the Board of Trustees made the award. Owners of Estates applied for the award and until the middle of the 20th century, the gardens would be visited and evaluated for three years in a row. The committee's evaluations determined whether the garden would be eligible for a visit in the subsequent year. During those visits, the Committee would often recommend other awards for the properties viewed. The Society's <i>Transactions</i> featured photographs and descriptions of the award winning properties. Links to the descriptions are provided under the column labeled "Description."</p>						
To Search Click "Control/F" on the Key Board						
Year	First	Middle	Last	City	State	Notes
1870	Edward	S.	Rand, Jr.	Dorham	MA	"Clen Ridge" [1871, Transactions pp. 131-136]
1871					No Award	
1872					No Award	
1873	William		Gray, Jr.	Dorchester	MA	"The Hermitage" [1873, Transactions pp. 120-122]
1874					No Award	
1875					No Award	
1876					No Award	
1877					No Award	
1878					No Award	
1879	Francis	Brown	Hoyes	Lexington	MA	"Pine Hill" [1879, Transactions pp. 198-200]
1880					No Award	
1881					No Award	
1882					No Award	

[Click here for a searchable spreadsheet with links to the award descriptions](#)

Press keys control/f and a searchable box will pop up.

Our Collections are Growing...

We collect award artifacts as part of our history and for display in our windows or exhibitions. Do you have a medal or other flower show award you would like to donate to the Library? If so, please contact Library Manager Maureen O'Brien at mobrien@masshort.org.

Come Visit the Library...

The Library is currently closed for visits and will reopen when The Gardens at Elm Bank reopen. We are looking forward to seeing you in the Library and visiting the gardens. Meanwhile if you wish to contact the Library send an email to mobrien@masshort.org.

Connect with us



www.MassHort.org - 617-933-4900