



Leaflet

A MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

A letter from the Chair of the Board



Dear Members and Friends,

Our incoming MHS President and Executive Director, James Hearsum, assumed his new duties on Tuesday, January 14, 2020--we're all so pleased to finally have him on-board!

From day-one James has been fully engaged, connecting with everyone: staff, volunteers, members and supporters;

he's being introduced to numerous organizations and appreciating the particulars of Mass Hort at The Gardens at Elm Bank as he becomes oriented in his new role. In the weeks ahead we expect to have opportunities for many friends and members to personally connect with James as we actively prepare for the upcoming seasons. I hope you'll have a chance to greet him soon.

On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, I want to express my appreciation for all the encouragement from everyone involved during this process. I share in the enthusiasm we're receiving from so many of you that we're embarking on an exciting and promising new era for the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

Many thanks for your help and support as we move to the future!

Horticulturally yours,

Wayne Mezitt
Trustee Board Chair

Upcoming Classes & Events:

Begonias for Any Season

February 11
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Understanding and Controlling Invasive Plants

February 20
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Build a Cold Frame Workshop

March 7
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Tree Ring Print Making, Hanging Wall Art Workshop

March 21
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

The Fundamentals of Landscape Design

March 24
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

**THE PARAGON GROUP BOSTON FLOWER &
GARDEN SHOW 2020
March 11 - 15**



The Boston Flower & Garden Show has a century-long history of providing a breath of spring and brief reprieve from the New England winter. The show inspires, educates, and motivates the region's gardeners. It's a great place to discover new ideas, and have a lot of fun at the same time.

For complete information on the Flower Show, click [HERE](#).

Current members will receive their tickets approximately 3 weeks before the start of the Show.

Flower & Garden Show Horticultural Competitions

Each year Massachusetts Horticultural Society celebrates and honors the artistic use of plants through three competition categories: Floral Design, Photography, and Horticulture.

Competitions are open to any amateur horticulturist and there is no entry fee.

Floral Design



Amateur floral designers are invited to enter one of six competition classes using flowers and other plant material.

Visit the [**Flower & Garden Show information page**](#) for complete information on entry classes, rules, judging and awards.

Amateur Horticulture



The Amateur Horticulture Competition celebrates the love of house plants. Show us your best.

Visit the [**Flower & Garden Show information page**](#) for a complete list of entry dates, rules, judging criteria, and awards



Show

FREE PROGRAM

Saturday, February 15

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Want to exhibit at the Boston Flower and Garden Show but not sure where to begin?

Marisa McCoy and Judy Morgan (Past and Present Design Chairs) will review all you need to know to be successful and have a lot of fun as an exhibitor.

For more information and to register click [here](#).

VOLUNTEER AT PARAGON'S BOSTON FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW?

Mass Hort is looking for volunteers to help with the Boston Flower & Garden Show!

The Flower Show is Mass Hort's largest outreach opportunity of the year. It allows us to connect with over 50,000 people - budding horticulturalists, Mass Hort members and supporters, floral designers, green enthusiasts and those just happy to dream of their gardens in the middle of winter. We aim to inspire, educate, and connect visitors to our mission and encourage them to join our community and support our mission through membership to Mass Hort.

To reach all of these people, we need your help - to set up and build our exhibits and competitions the weekend before the Show, and to help staff our exhibits at the Show. It is a fun way to see the Show behind the scenes, support our mission, and meet others that share a passion for plants!

Please sign up today! We have a limited amount of slots and hope to see you there!

[**Click here to volunteer**](#)

If you'd like more information please contact Julie Griffin at jgriffin@masshort.org or 617-933-4934

What's Better than Flowers for Valentine's Day?



Flowers all year long!

VALENTINES DAY MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION

Give the gift of a Mass Hort Membership and the loves in your life will receive:

- Ticket(s) to the 2020 Boston Flower and Garden Show
- Free admission to The Gardens at Elm Bank
- Reduced rates on horticultural classes & programs
- Discounts at local nurseries & garden centers
- And much more!

Act today to save \$10 off and give a gift they'll love all year long*

Memberships must be purchased by Friday, February 8.

Gift a Membership

*Offer valid for new members only; offer not valid for renewing members

PROGRAMS & EDUCATION

Course Spotlight:

Tree Ring Print Making: Botanical Wall Art

I'm so excited to see this workshop in action! It doesn't matter how many prints you've made; you still can't wait to see the end result when you lift up the paper. Not only are you taking home an awesome custom piece of art with this class, but you're diving deeper into what relief printing is all about. This course will be led by woodworker and designer, [Ian Meli](#). Ian has a bachelor's in Visual Arts from UMass and has shown his works at the Harbor Gallery at UMass Boston.

Ian's classes lead students through the history, cultural values & practice of traditional relief printing. You'll explore not only the techniques and styles of relief printing, but the botanical significance of working with woody stems. Learning to read the wood density and structure helps to play an important role in determining the level of scouring and touching needed to achieve the ideal print. A



demonstration of materials and tools will be an integral part of this course. Students will then apply their understanding of materials, techniques, and styles of relief printing to complete their own final piece of hanging wall art which highlights the intricacy of a cross section of a tree. I will definitely be popping my head in at the end to see everyone's masterpieces!

Allison Dush
Director of Programs & Education

Check out our [Upcoming Classes page](#) for all our exciting educational programs.



February Horticultural Hints

by Betty Sanders
Lifetime Master Gardener

A great time for major yard work. If you have trees or shrubs to remove, or other major work in the garden, get it done while the ground is frozen in order to prevent much more serious damage that will occur if it is done when the ground softens in the spring – usually by mid-March. Soft ground compacted by heavy machinery will need a major reworking to make it loose enough for plants to grow well next year. Few things are as bad for lawns or gardens as soil compaction.

Learn something new. Get out and take a class! Whether it's on vegetable gardening or orchid growing, pruning shrubs in your yard or replacing your conventional lawn with a more environmentally sound alternative, use the time you are not gardening to become a better gardener and steward of the land.

Act now to protect for spring. Take advantage of days when it is above freezing to spray dormant oil on your fruit and nut trees. Dormant – also called horticultural – oil is harmless to birds and bees. It coats and smothers egg masses of damaging insects so they will not hatch and start eating the tree's new leaves in the spring. It must be applied on days when the temperature is above freezing and before leaves start to open, so February and March provide the best window for their use.



Protect your evergreens. On that warm day, also consider a second trip around your yard to refresh the anti-desiccant coating on both broad leaf (like rhododendrons) and needled evergreens that can be damaged by strong sun or drying winds over the winter. (Wilt-Pruf and Wilt-Stop are two such products). While we have mostly had a mild winter so far, every New Englander knows there is no guarantee harsh weather isn't coming.

Start seedlings. If you are a vegetable or flower gardener who starts your own seedlings indoors for planting later, February is the month to get ageratum, petunias, and other annual flowers started along with vegetables such as beets, leeks, lettuce and onions. Your work now will give you a head start on a more productive garden this season.



Keep the deer at bay. While this has been a low-snowfall winter thus far, that can change quickly in February. Clear snow around small trees and shrubs to make it harder for rodents to eat the



bark. On a warm day (above 40 degrees), spray deer repellents on the evergreens that the deer eat. As they get hungrier, deer become less fussy about what's on the menu, but a mouthful of repellent may send them to another area.

To see more of Betty's horticultural advice, please visit BettyOnGardening.com.



Groundhog Daze

by Neal Sanders
Leaflet contributor

This past Sunday - February 2 - you undoubtedly heard on the radio, saw on television or (heaven help you) live-streamed Punxsutawney Phil climbing out of his cage and either seeing or not seeing his shadow which means there either will or will not be six more weeks of winter. Amazingly, this will be the 134th year in a row that the town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, will re-enact this bit of municipal schmaltz. Even more amazing, Punxsutawney is just one of nearly a hundred towns in the U.S. and Canada annually hold such early morning stunts.

Before I go further, let me first say that I think the film, *Groundhog Day*, is one of the most original stories every told by the American cinema. For that 1993 film, Bill Murray can be forgiven all manner of duds (*The Royal Tennenbaums*, *Garfield*, *A Very Murray Christmas*) and Andie MacDowell will forever remain in my mind as one of the sweetest actresses to grace the screen.

But, to the best of my knowledge, we do not celebrate Benedict Arnold's birthday in this country (I cannot speak for Canada), nor do we set aside a day to honor, say, the Japanese Beetle. Why on earth do we have a day that commemorates a rodent (technically, a large ground squirrel) whose sole purpose in life, I fervently believe, is to destroy every vegetable garden within waddling distance?

To begin with, 'groundhog' is simply one of the many aliases for a nemesis we know well in New England – the woodchuck. Elsewhere in the country, this creature has set up shop using the monikers 'whistle-pig', 'land-beaver' and 'marmot'. Its Latin name is *Marmota monax*. The woodchuck currently sleeping in a burrow just outside your garden likely has forged identity cards from many states, including one issued by the Algonquins for its original name, *wuchak*.

Woodchucks gravitate to vegetable gardens the way Celtics fans seek out the TD Garden. As the Cornell Extension Service rather dryly states it, “*Woodchucks can become a nuisance when their feeding and burrowing habits conflict with human interests. They frequently damage vegetable and flower gardens, agricultural crops, orchards, nurseries, and areas around buildings. Damage to crops can be costly...*” The word ‘costly’ is undoubtedly used as an understatement.

How pernicious are woodchucks? For the past eleven years, my wife, Betty, and I have managed a community garden in the town where we live. It is a wonderful garden in a sunny, bucolic setting. Last year, it was divided into 77 plots tightly packed into an acre of Iowa-quality soil. Thirty of those plots are around the perimeter of the site and, in any given year, woodchucks will invade several of them.

Though all plots are supposed to be fenced with a recommendation of at least six inches of said fence buried below grade, inevitably some gardeners decide to play the odds. As soon as the first lettuce and spinach come up, the colony of woodchucks around us (possibly 30 strong) come sniffing and seeing if they can put their nose under the barrier. If the fence is plastic, even that six-inch rule doesn’t stop them (plastic and lettuce taste the same to a woodchuck).

This past year, one woodchuck family took up residence in a perimeter plot, creating a burrow four feet across where corn had been growing. It took three days of hose watering to get mom and the kids evicted. Another garden was repeatedly ‘submarined’ in the same spot by an ambitious woodchuck. I finally helped the gardener drive metal stakes set six inches apart down 18 inches into the subsoil. That woodchuck is probably still sulking.

I might feel differently about Groundhog Day if I suspected that the rodent involved actually had some prognostication ability. However, no less an authority than the Canadian Encyclopedia, using data from 13 cities gathered over a 30 to 40-year span, puts the prediction success level at just 37%. In other words, you can do better flipping a coin.

So, please excuse me for not having been glued to the live, 7:20 a.m. webcast from Pennsylvania. Looking out at my currently snow-free garden this year, I can’t help but feel that winter was over before it began.

Neal Sanders’ 14th mystery, ‘A Murder on the Garden Tour’ will be published later this month.

Not Wanted



Groundhog

Alias woodchuck, marmot, whistle-pig, land beaver and wuchuk

Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard

By Douglas W. Tallamy
Timber Press: Portland, Oregon, 2020

Reviewed by Patrice Todisco

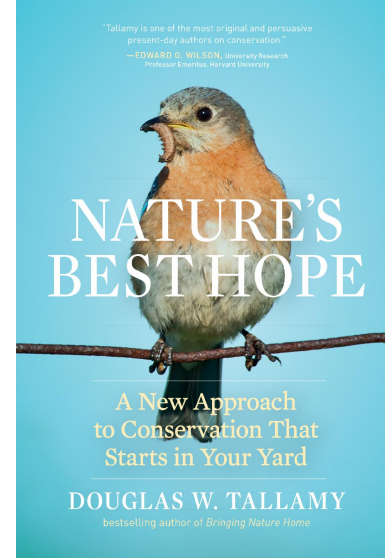
The United States recently rolled back environmental regulations protecting streams, wetlands, and other bodies of water. These changes weaken pollution safeguards for the sources of drinking water for nearly one third of all Americans and adversely impact ecosystems essential to the long-term viability of fragile species of birds, plants, and amphibians.

This jarring news arrives as wildlife ecologist, entomologist, and conservationist, Douglas Tallamy’s new book, *Nature’s Best*

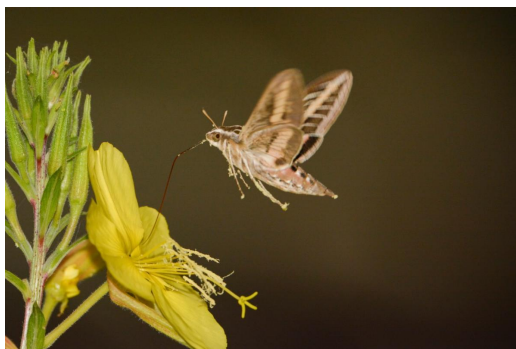
Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard, is published. Tallamy, the best-selling author of *Bringing Nature Home*, is clear. Our relationship with the earth is broken, and new conservation approaches are needed now more than ever.

Building upon the work of Aldo Leopold and E.O. Wilson, Tallamy asserts that our current reliance on traditional models of land conservation - national parks and wildlife refuges - does not adequately support a sustainable level of biodiversity. With more than 83 percent of land in the United States being privately owned, and 86 percent of land east of the Mississippi in private hands, the portfolio of publicly owned open spaces is too small, vulnerable, and fragmented to provide the habitats necessary to safeguard vulnerable species.

His solution? Turn the places in which we live and work into conservation corridors and wildlife habitats that become a system of Homegrown National Parks. To achieve this goal, we are all called upon to participate by assessing our own landscapes and implementing change. You are what you plant, and what you plant determines the role you play in the future.



To improve the ecological function of our privately-owned landscapes Tallamy recommends removing excessive pavement, reducing turfed lawns, and replacing ornamental species with native plantings. While these actions have been widely endorsed, and are inherently logical, Tallamy refuses to accept the current pace of progress. The carrying capacity of the American landscape, that is the amount and types of plants that are able to support the abundance and diversity of life that can live in that landscape, is maxed out. There is no alternative but to fix it and do it quickly.



Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard, includes practical measures, and the underlying science that supports them, to create a Homegrown National Park in your own yard. The case is made for replacing ornamental plantings with native species that support insects and insectivores, specialist pollinators, complex food webs, local biodiversity, interaction diversity, and ecosystem function. Planting keystone species, hyperproductive plants with a disproportionately large effect on the abundance and diversity of other species in an ecosystem, is key.

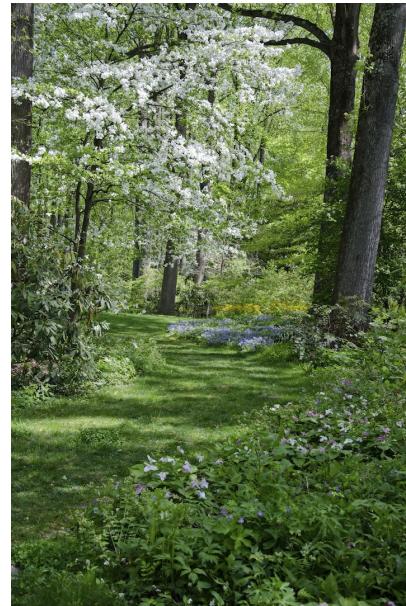
Thus, while I cringe each fall when tasked with raking the endless, late falling leaves of the many oaks in my yard, I have now learned that they are a keystone plant for my region, rock-stars in the world of trees that are ranked number one among temperate zone species in multiple measures of performance. Their huge canopies and massive root systems prevent erosion and their leaf litter is home to hundreds of species of invertebrates. But most importantly oaks rank as one of, if not the highest, trees to support caterpillar species, making them bird feeders extraordinaire and masters of

the food web.

Is Tallamy's vision for a nation of Homegrown National Parks possible, and will it work? To start, he reminds us that nature is resilient - his primary source of motivation. If nature can do its part, can't we? This is a particularly vexing question for those living in suburban settings with preconceived notions of beauty (often equated with ornamental plantings) tidiness (often realized by lack of diversity) and conformity (often proscribed by neighborhood regulations and attitudes). Tallamy believes that change is incremental and that each of us can and does make a difference. He provides examples of progressive garden clubs and organizations who are doing so.

In a concluding chapter Tallamy provides ten concrete steps for moving forward. Of these, two speak to the need for local collaboration and communication - networking with neighbors and educating civic associations. It is through collective endeavors that the compromises needed for the necessary changes in attitude towards the landscape will occur. Conceived as the largest cooperative conservation project ever imagined, Homegrown National Parks will succeed only if the stewardship of the earth's resources becomes part of the everyday culture of individuals and the local communities in which they reside.

Upon finishing, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*, I began to search for additional information and support. Tallamy describes the book as imagining a series of small efforts by many people that will lead to "enormous physical, psychological, and environmental benefits to all." We are all ready to embrace those steps collectively and encourage Tallamy to continue to lead the way.



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

From the Stacks:

By Maureen T. O'Brien,
Library Manager

*[A]t its best,
preservation engages the past
in a conversation with the present
over a mutual concern for the future.*

William Murtagh (1923-2018)

At the Library, a dedicated group of history lovers are working hard to preserve the Society's history for the future. While it is a labor of love, it can also be "fun" and lead us in new directions that enhance the stories we have to tell.

Featured Collection – Correspondence

The Library maintains "correspondence" files, more aptly labeled "papers" of the Society, dating from 1816. We have started a project to make the papers accessible online. One of our volunteers, Kathy Trumbull is creating a finding aid. Maureen Horn is transcribing the papers so today's reader can understand the content. Our newest volunteer, Claudia Schwartz will be scanning the documents, with the goal that we will publish them online.

Although three different people are working on the project, all with different tasks, they collaborate on projects. As is often the case with researchers, one fact or question will lead to tangents that enriches and offers further insight into the subject. A fourth volunteer, Jennifer Wilton from England assisted Maureen Horn in interpreting English symbols in an 1829 letter from Thomas Aspinwall to our first president General H.S. Dearborn. Maureen provided Kathy with important information on Thomas

Aspinwall, thus augmenting the information on the face of the letter. The letter involved an order of books for our Original Library from London. The letter gave details on the titles, cost and delivery of the order. Intrigued, Maureen Horn began to research Aspinwall's background.

Maureen discovered that Aspinwall was a hero in the War of 1812, where he lost his left arm. He was appointed Counsel to London by President Madison in 1816, a post he held for 38 years. While in London he also served as a literary agent. Among his clients were the Society and Washington Irving. You can read more about Maureen's research [here](#).

In the twenty-first century, we face challenges in preserving correspondence since so much is done electronically. We need to adopt protocols and new methods to preserve our documents because what we do today is tomorrow's history.

In the Windows – Books on Romance

Throughout history, gardens and plants have been associated with romance and love. We are celebrating Valentine's Day with a display of books that evoke love and romance in the garden.

Our Collections are Growing...

The Library relies on the generosity of its members to build and preserve its Collections. This month we thank Heidi Kost-Gross, Alice Tangerini, Catherine Clifford, Sudbury Historical Society and Iva Hayes for their in-kind contributions to the Library.

Come Visit the Library...

Drop into the Library when the lights are on to browse or go shopping. The Library has a section of horticulture books for sale at bargain prices. They make wonderful eco-friendly gifts or additions to your personal reference library. For hours or to make an appointment visit our [webpage](#).



Image: *Acorus calamus* (Plate 17) from the [Edwin Hale Lincoln Collection](#) of glass plate negatives. Check out Garden Education Instructor Lise Lorimer's "Plate of the Week" in *Mass Hort Weekly* that features images from the collection and an in-depth discussion of the featured plant.

Connect with us



www.MassHort.org - 617-933-4900