



Leaflet

A MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

A letter from the Chair of the Board



On behalf of the entire board of Massachusetts Horticultural Society, I am pleased to welcome James Hearsum to the position of President and Executive Director of Massachusetts Horticultural Society. James will be taking over the reins and guiding Mass Hort starting in mid-January. For the last 5-plus years, he has been the Executive Director of St. Andrews Botanic Garden in Scotland, where he has driven numerous enhancements, including a sustainable Urban Farm, Butterfly House and Community Hub, among many other projects.

We're all looking forward to working with James as he brings his energy and passion to our organization. We know many exciting initiatives will emerge, and can't wait to see what "sprouts" at Mass Hort in the years ahead: we are confident you will be inspired too!

The Trustees would also like to sincerely thank Suzanne Maas for her exceptional vigor and commitment serving as interim head. For more than a year she has delivered stimulating leadership, providing Mass Hort with robust systems and a solid base from which we know great results will follow. We wish Suzanne a relaxing respite from all her endeavors here, and success in her next venture.

Horticulturally yours,

Wayne Mezitt
Trustee Board Chair

Upcoming Classes & Events:

Designing for the Winter Landscape

January 22 & 29
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Stop Mulch-scaping and Start Landscaping

January 23
7:00 - 8:30 pm

Wine Tasting & Talk of Boston Developed Heirloom Grapes

February 8
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Wildlife Feeders

February 8
10:00 am - 11:30 am

Begonias for Any Season

February 11
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Valentine's Day Floral Design

February 12
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm



Letter from the Interim President

Dear Members and Friends,

2019 has been an extraordinary year by many measures.

It has been a year of Growth -

Growth in garden visitation of 250% over 2018

Growth in Adult Education - a 213% increase

Growth in Youth Education - a 74% increase

Growth in staffing - 2 new part-time positions and an increase in hours of others.

It has been a year of improving the Garden Experience -

Adding perimeter fencing to keep off-leash dogs out of the gardens and moving vehicles out of the gardens and off of tree roots are the two biggest improvements in the protection of the gardens this year. Plus keeping all vendors on pavement and off of the turf and our sprinkler systems was a huge change.

There was a total renovation of the Italianate Garden fountain in early spring followed by Weezies Garden for Children improvements including rebuild the Twig Tower, Bird's Nest seating and renovated water features.

We have a long way to go with plant identification and signage, and look forward to many additional improvements in horticulture and design under the leadership of James Hearsom.

It has been a year of improving the Guest Experience -

New Guest Services Guidelines were introduced to the staff this year and to our volunteer garden stewards. Other improvements include: a weekend manager on duty in the gardens, tiling and painting of our family and accessible bathroom, parking lot improvements with painted lines, lighting and garden islands, water testing and installation of an indoor water fountain, and new HVAC system in the Education building.

Transition to James Hearsom

As I hand off to James in mid-January, it is the goal of an intentional interim, such as myself, to prepare the entire organization, Trustees and staff to work with the incoming President.

In this case, so much has been put in place this year that I know we are well positioned to continue our upward trajectory under new leadership. James, I welcome the opportunity to support the launch of your tenure and wish you many years of success at Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

I will close by expressing my deep appreciation to the Staff for welcoming me and embracing my leadership. We have put so much in place this year to support the future growth of The Gardens at Elm Bank, Mass Hort and our members and guests.

I am grateful to the Trustees who thoughtfully kept the best interests of The Gardens at Elm Bank and Massachusetts Horticultural Society and of our membership ever present in their thinking and decision-making. They each care deeply for this organization. That care and concern manifests in many different ways, but in the end it comes down to what is in the best interest of Mass Hort and all of our audiences.

Thank you.

Suzanne Maas

Interim President/Executive Director

THANK YOU!!!

Thank you to all those who helped make our 2019 Festival of Trees such a wonderful event. We had over **100 volunteers donate over 750 hours of time.** It's very exciting and rewarding that Mass Hort has such dedicated volunteers! It is because of you, the Festival of Trees continues to be one of the most beloved holiday traditions anywhere.

A special note of gratitude goes out to our Festival of Trees co-chairs, Gretel Anspach, Penni Jenkins and Holly Perry for all they do to bring the event to life.



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

Adult Photography Competition

Deadline: January 17, 2020

For complete class descriptions, rules, guidelines, time line, judging criteria, and entry information click [here](#)



Youth Photography Competition

Deadline: February 1, 2020

The Youth Photography competition is open to junior photographers (16 and under) who use flowers and nature as their subjects.

Youth Photography rules and guidelines can be downloaded [here](#)

PROGRAMS & EDUCATION

Hope springs eternal.

With the turning of the calendar to a new year a gardener's thoughts instinctively turn toward warmer weather and the anticipation of getting back in the garden.

In New England however, that is still months away. In the meantime, grab a shot of inspiration and sign up for a class or two at Mass Hort.

With classes covering an array of topics you're sure to find one that may brighten a cloudy day or help you start to plan your gardening season. From [Winter Landscape Design](#) to [Wine Tasting](#), [Understanding Invasive Plants](#) to [Floral Design](#), you're sure to find a class that will brighten your day and help to make the colder months pass by a little bit faster.

Check out our [Upcoming Classes page](#) on the Mass Hort

CALENDAR & COURSES

2019-2020 Fall and Winter



MASSACHUSETTS
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
THE GARDENS AT ELM BANK

Allison Dush
Director of Programs & Education

Annual Fund

Thank you for your support in 2019!

The gardens grew more beautiful... our education programs continued to expand... and our connection to the community has never been stronger!

Be a part of our future success by making your donation today.

Help us grow in 2020!

DONATE TODAY



January Horticultural Hints

*by Betty Sanders
Lifetime Master Gardener*

Resolve to have a vegetable garden this year. Catalogs and garden centers are full of specially bred vegetables that don't require much space; just a container with good soil, placed in sunlight and regularly watered. Add a couple of marigolds to discourage pests and no one will recognize it as your vegetable garden.

Toss holiday poinsettias as soon as they begin to drop leaves. It's a tropical plant that requires a greenhouse to survive, let alone re-bloom, in New England. Once those bracts are gone, you're left with a spindly, leggy plant that is toxic to pets.

Water sparingly between now and spring. If you keep your houseplants constantly wet (overwatered), they become a perfect breeding ground for fungus gnats. Those gnats, in turn, will quickly look for other plants to colonize. Allow soil in the pot to dry out somewhat between waterings.



Use these cold winter months to plan a new, small garden of something you have never grown before. It could be annual flowers from seed, summer and fall bulbs, perennial grasses or something that catches your fancy in a seed catalog. Breaking out of old habits keeps your garden interesting, and you might find a new passion.

Photograph your garden now, before it is covered in snow. January and February are the best time to see your own garden without distraction. If



it's brown and sad, that is a good way to look at the 'bones' of the garden (what gives it shape). When spring arrives, those pictures will help you decide what needs to be added to give it more year-round interest.

Time is rushing by if you plan to order seeds or plants from catalogs. Far sooner than you think, many varieties may sell out. Or, the organic seed you prefer won't be available. Or you'll realize you didn't order something you promised yourself last year that you would grow this year.

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



The Allure of the Spring Catalog

by Neal Sanders
Leaflet contributor

It was one of those awful days at the end of December. Sleet changed to rain and back again in a meteorological tug-of-war that seemed to have sapping the post-holiday spirit as its lone purpose. At mid-day, I trudged out to the mailbox at the end of our driveway, managing to turn an umbrella inside out when a gust of wind caught it as I reached in for whatever the postman had seen fit to leave on such a dreary afternoon. Back in the house, I plunked the mail down, uninspected, on the kitchen counter and went off to finish a book.

I came downstairs an hour later and found my wife at the dining table. There was the aroma of a freshly-brewed pot of tea. Across the table's surface were catalogs and magazines – specifically *gardening* catalogs and magazines. One had already been marked up with pages folded over and items circled. Another was undergoing the same scrutiny. The third and fourth waited in the wings.

With the arrival of those glossy, color catalogs, the spring gardening season is officially underway. And, the winter gloom seems to have lifted just a little.



White Flower Farm featured *Daucus* 'Dara' on its cover. To me, it's Queen Anne's Lace, but if someone wants to call it by some unfamiliar name and label it a 'hard-to-find' annual, that's fine with me. 'Dara' offers delicate flowers ranging in color from white to maroon. By the vehemence of the circling, I have every reason to believe it will grace our garden this spring and provide a burst of color beginning in July.

Scabiosa, better known as pincushion flower, has one of the least attractive names ever appended to a beautiful flower. Johnny's of Maine features a 'Pincushion Series' featuring a mix of color from almost black to creamy apricot and lavender blue. The wonderful thing about *scabiosa* is they're near perfect for cutting. They can simultaneously grace a garden as well as a dining table.

Betty's heart never wanders far from the vegetable garden, and I found a dozen pages folded over in Pinetree Seeds' 2020 catalog. After several disappointing tries, we had great success with fennel this past year. I don't know if 'Florence' fennel is the same variety we grew in 2019, but this one promises a one-pound bulb twice the size of its nearest competitor, yet delivering sweet, anise-like flavor.

She also grows okra because my southern roots demand I have it as part of my diet. This year, she circled one called 'Jambalaya' (the perfect name, in my view) that promises dark green pods in 55

days. Because it can't be planted until the soil temperature is close to 80 degrees, getting from seed to fruit in under two months sounds about perfect for New England.

Ultimately, gardening catalogs are a lifeline between the past and the future. We've chosen to live in a climate where fruit, flowers, and greenery are compressed into five or six months that are equal parts precious and spectacular. Looked at from an outdoor gardener's viewpoint, January is the year's nadir, not its start. It has been three months since the garden was alive with color, and it will be three months until it again begins to show its promise. Those catalogs are tangible proof spring is just a few months away.

Neal Sanders is at work on his 14th mystery. 'A Murder on the Garden Tour' will be published in March 2020. You can find his books on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

The Tulip: 20th - Anniversary Edition

By Anna Pavord
Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2019

Reviewed by Patrice Todisco

When does a passion become an obsession? For Anna Pavord, it began with a small net of bulbs purchased by her husband on a business trip to Amsterdam. She planted them in her garden and when they emerged in late April, no two were alike. The tulip 'Gudoshnik', with its creamy yellow petals flecked by spots of red and rose is complex, elegant, and beautiful. Pavord was hooked.

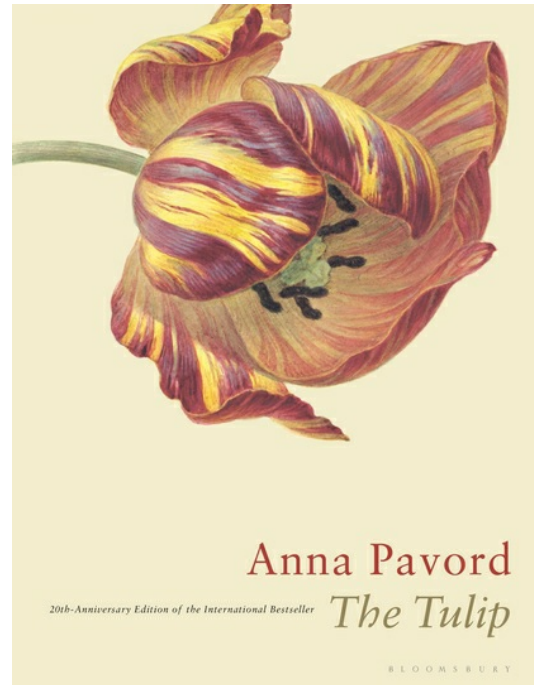
The outcome of Pavord's obsession was the unlikely international best-seller, *The Tulip*, published in 1999. Modestly describing herself as the "kind of person that likes finding out stuff," Pavord spent more than seven years researching and writing the manuscript, producing the first comprehensive study of the tulip in more than seventy years.

A political, social, economic, religious, intellectual and cultural history of just one flower, *The Tulip*, traces its influence on trade over multiple centuries and cultures. A tale of speculation, intrigue and greed when published twenty years ago, during the dot com bubble, the book's timing proved eerily prescient to the prevailing economic climate of the time. Its story, a cautionary tale of the impact of irrational investment in the pursuit of wealth and beauty, brought the history of the tulip and Tulipomania to the forefront.

Twenty years on, the complex history of the tulip continues to enthrall. In the revised and redesigned 20th - Anniversary Edition of *The Tulip*, Pavord brings the reader up to date on recent developments. The book includes a new preface, a revised listing of the best tulip varieties to choose for your garden, and a reorganized listing of species that reflects the most recent work of taxonomists. A chronology of the tulip, extensive notes, and a bibliography provide additional background information that supports Pavord's meticulous research.

An unruly genus, more than any other flowering bulb the tulip defies the careful parameters of botanists and taxonomists. The very characteristics that made the tulip a source of wonder and delight conspire to make the bulb equally difficult to categorize. Seventy-eight different species are believed to exist in the Old World, mainly in Central Asia. All belong to the family of Liliaceae and grow from bulbs, covered in a dark brown or black skin, called a tunic.

As the tulip migrated from east to west, its unpredictable coloration, now known to be the result of a virus, made the flower both a prize and a project. The focus of plant breeders, nurserymen, and florists' societies, the tulip served as a popular subject for artists and artisans alike, celebrated across



genres and cultures. From its use as an ornamental jewel-like feature adorning the turbans of Ottoman sultans, to its systematic planting in formal garden beds, the tulip was prized like no other flower.

By the time the tulip arrives in Holland, in *The Tulip*, Pavord has charted its journey from the East throughout Northern Europe, England and France. While Holland cannot claim first rights to the tulip, it remains the country that maintains the closest relationship with the flower. At one time the quest for the perfect tulip drove Holland's market in bulbs to cataclysmic, ruinous heights (with the price of one bulb of 'Semper Augustus', deemed the most beautifully marked of all red and white tulips in the seventeenth century, equivalent to three times the average annual wage in the country.) Today more than a million tulips are sold a day during peak season.

From our twenty-first century perspective, the rage for tulips that drove Tulipomania seems unlikely, as the flower is so widely available. In Holland, forcing tulips for the cut flower trade is more lucrative than providing bulbs. To support the demand for cut flowers, half of the bulb fields in the Netherlands are planted with the same twenty cultivars and the cut flower market in tulips is dominated by just ten cultivars (should you wonder why all the tulips you buy look the same). This is described by Pavord as "a hideous *reductio ad absurdum* for a flower that nature equipped with more than a thousand tricks."

At more than four hundred and fifty pages in length, *The Tulip*, is an all-encompassing epic that leaves no historical detail uncovered. Pavord follows the lengthy history of the flower as it is reinvented over and over again; coveted, abandoned and rescued to become the popular cut flower that it is today. Lavishly illustrated, this edition of Pavord's classic magnum opus is an invaluable reference for any home gardener or landscape historian to read and savor.

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

From the Stacks:

By Maureen T. O'Brien,
Library Manager

*... we had the irises, rising beautiful and cool on their tall stalks, like blown glass,
like pastel water momentarily frozen in a splash, light blue, light mauve,
and the darker ones, velvet and purple, black cat's ears in the sun, indigo shadow,
and the bleeding hearts, so female in shape it was a surprise
they'd not long since been rooted out.*

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Featured Collection – Works on Iris

Iris, derived from the Greek, means rainbow. Iris is the Greek goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the gods. Purple irises were planted over the graves of women to summon the Goddess to guide the dead in their journey. In the language of flowers, Iris symbolizes eloquence. In the United States, the iris is the birth flower for February, the flower for the 25th wedding anniversary and the state flower for Tennessee.

January 29, 2020 marks the 100 anniversary of the founding of The [American Iris Society](#). Its first goal was to bring order to the then-confused nomenclature of the genus Iris, especially garden iris species and cultivars.

Bostonian Grace Sturtevant (1865–1947), an early 20th century iris breeder, was known as "America's first lady of iris" and was a founding member of the American Iris Society. In 1901, she bought property on Glen Road in Wellesley that became a showplace for its iris plantings. In 1910, Sturtevant began hybridizing irises using varieties imported from Europe. By 1916, she was exhibiting her irises at the Society's shows. She received many awards over the years and became one of the foremost hybridizers of iris in the country. In 1918, she began a commercial nursery, "Glen Farms Nursery" at Wellesley Farms. In 1924, Sturtevant received the Society's Gold Medal "for her skill in originating new iris varieties" and for the highly scientific character of her work. We have the 1918 to 1932 catalogs from her Glen Farms Nursery in our [collections](#).

In the Windows – Books on Irises

Irises are perennial plants and as with most perennials, its blooms are fleeting but reward the gardener with highly anticipated and reliable blooming year after year. The Iris genus has 325 species and 50,000 registered varieties. Irises are typically divided into two groups: bearded iris and beardless iris. Explore the vast varieties of iris and learn about their care with books from our collections.

Our Collections are Growing...

The Library relies on the generosity of its members to build and preserve its Collections. This month we thank the San Francisco Botanical Garden Library for its donation of Pamphlets relating to Biblical gardens and Catherine Clifford and Joanne Neale for their in-kind contributions to the Library.

In the past, the Library published its recent acquisitions in Transactions. This year, we are happy to report that the Library added 454 books to its Collections as well as periodicals, pamphlets and ephemera. [Here](#) is the list of the 2019 'new' and 'new to us' books.

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: Larger blue flag, *Iris versicolor* by Isaac Sprague (1811-1895), from the Society's Botanical Print Collection that you can view online [here](#). *Iris versicolor*, commonly called northern blue flag, is a clump-forming iris that is native to marshes, swamps, wet meadows, ditches and shorelines.

Connect with us



www.MassHort.org - 617-933-4900