



November 2018

[DONATE NOW](#)



Letter from the Chairman

Dear Members,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Board of Trustees, I want to take this opportunity to provide key updates as we are quickly approaching the Holiday season. We continue to make progress and are nearing the completion of our 18-month Master Planning project for renewing, enhancing, and expanding The Gardens at Elm Bank. I want to thank Kyle Zick, Founder and Principal of Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture, who has directed this work with the support of my fellow Board members, the Mass Hort staff, our members, and our neighbors and town officials from Dover, Natick and Wellesley. Truly great work is happening here and there is so much more to come.

It's also important to inform you that Kathy Macdonald, the Society's President and Executive Director since 2010, is leaving Mass Hort. In her tenure Kathy successfully initiated both a Strategic Planning process and the subsequent preparation of a long-range Master Plan for The Gardens at Elm Bank. We sincerely thank her for her dedication, energy and leadership. We wish her well in her next phase.

We are proceeding in the hiring of an interim head and the Board will initiate a thorough search to identify and hire a permanent Executive Director and President. We expect a transitional leader to be in place shortly. Over the near term, I will have oversight for Mass Hort.

Our goal is to continue to build on the Society's foundation and bring our much-celebrated Master Plan to life. I hope you share in our excitement for the progress we are making. As always, I also want to thank you for your continued support of Mass Hort and wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,

Wayne Mezitt
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Upcoming Classes & Events:

[Cacti and Succulents](#)

Saturday, November 3
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

[Ecological Gardening Symposium](#)

Wednesday, November 7
1 - 5 p.m.

[The English Garden](#)

Thursday, November 8
10 a.m. - 12 noon

[Make a Holiday Centerpiece](#)

Tuesday, November 13
1 - 3:30 p.m.

[Festival of Trees](#)

Friday, November 23 to
Sunday, December 9

[Infusing Herbal Gifts](#)

Tuesday, December 4
1 - 3 p.m.

[Digital Photography Workshop](#)

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



Mass Hort's Tenth Annual Festival of Trees will take place Friday, November 23 through Sunday, December 9! We hope our members will bring family and friends 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.

Visitors can also stroll the grounds, which will be decorated for the season. On Saturday and Sundays, there will be Santa visits, horse-drawn wagon rides, and music. Be sure to plan time to see *Snow Village*, an enchanted exhibit of holiday villages and trains. Bill Meagher of Needham donated this collection to Massachusetts

Horticultural Society and continues to add more intricate figures and vehicles to this delightful winter scene in miniature. This large display includes model Fenway Park, Beacon Hill, Dickens' Village, the North Pole, a carnival, and it changes each year! Train enthusiasts, families, and children will surely get excited about the holiday season when they visit Mass Hort's Festival of Trees!

Holiday Festival Hours:

Friday - Sunday, November 23 – 25: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Wednesday - Thursday, November 28 – 29: 4 - 8 p.m.

Friday - Sunday, November 30 – December 2: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Wednesday - Thursday, December 5 – 6: 4 - 8 p.m.

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

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

Horse drawn carriage rides will return this year (as will the horses, Bill and Bob) for weekend visitors. Santa will be visiting on Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

Have questions? Visit our [website](#) or call 617-933-4988 for information. [And, Sign up to Volunteer!](#)

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

Mass Hort Helps Gardeners Grow Green!

Wednesday, November 7, 1 - 5 p.m.



On Wednesday, November 7, Mass Hort will host a symposium to empower home gardeners to become the stewards of their landscape.

Presenters will introduce you to the basic principles and benefits of ecological gardening. Attendees will discover environmentally-friendly ways that make garden maintenance easier! Presentations will review methods of organic land care, introduce you to native shrubs to beautify your landscape, and share what you can plant to

support pollinators. Presentations will be full of images and anecdotes from our presenters' professional work and growing experiences.

[Register Here](#)

Organic Land Care – Why it Matters

Presented by Evelyn Lee, [Butternut Gardens LLC](#)

Protect your landscape, yourself, and the environment. Urban and suburban land care matters. It can

save money in the long run and does a world of good for the birds, insects and other wildlife that coexist in our gardens, lawns and yards.

Planting Native Shrubs

Presented by Karen Longeteig, [Going Native Gardens](#)

There are many beautiful native shrubs which you can incorporate into your landscape. These plants provide food and habitat to wildlife, lend color and beauty to your yard, and they require less maintenance. Karen Longeteig will review the growing habits of ten lesser-known native shrubs which grow very well in Massachusetts landscapes.

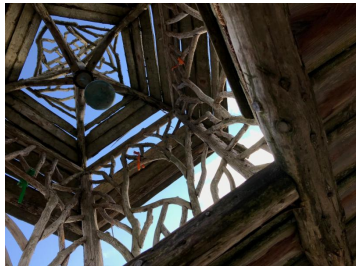
Pollinator Gardening

Presented by Kim Smith, [Kim Smith Designs](#)

Following the rhythm of the seasons, celebrated landscape designer Kim Smith will present a stunning slide show and lecture demonstrating how to create a welcoming haven for bees, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Native plants and examples of organic and architectural features will be discussed based on their value to particular vertebrates and invertebrates.

The symposium will run from 1 to 5 p.m. \$40/member and \$60/member [Please register here](#)

Announcing the 2018 Garden Photography Competition Winners



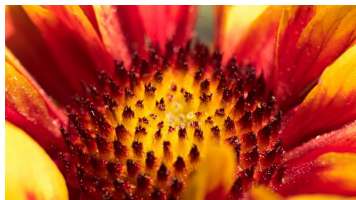
Best Abstract
Janet Josselyn



Best Black & White
Cyrus Komer



Best Landscape
David Joseph Correia



Best Close-Up Botanical
Greg Molica



Best Image with People
Kira Seamon



Best Professional Image
Sara Sniderman

Thanks to all who entered! You can also find these images on our [website](#).

Two Invasive Vines with Colorful Berries

By R. Wayne Mezitt

Mass Hort Trustee Chairman

As autumn celebrates its journey toward winter; two notable vines with brightly-colored fruit attract our attention: [oriental bittersweet](#) (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) and [porcelain vine](#) (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*),



both introduced to the USA many years ago from eastern Asia. As spectacularly-appealing as these two plants may be to the eye, they are invasive and not a welcome addition to your yard. Both are greedy growers that aggressively clamber up and over desirable trees and shrubs, shading-out sunlight, choking, sometimes even pulling-down branches. And they're not easy to control.

Seedlings of bittersweet germinate readily, even in shady conditions. Their rounded leaves emerge early in spring along rapidly-growing stems that reach out

and seek nearby trees, shrubs or any support to use as a scaffold. They wind firmly around their host, actively climbing toward the light. Often inconspicuous when young among the branches of their supporting plants, uncontrolled older vines can eventually grow to 60+ ft. long with stems 4 inches or more in diameter.

Unfortunately, bittersweet's orange-red berries have become a familiar sight most everywhere, their cut fruiting branches historically enjoyed as part of Halloween and Thanksgiving holiday décor (please don't do that!). Yellow bittersweet pods appear in early autumn, waiting until closer to the first frost to open and reveal the orange-red fruit inside. Their visual appeal lasts for many weeks until taken by hungry animals or a hard freeze causes them to drop.

Porcelain vine is not as commonly seen in this region (yet!). During the summer and other seasons, distinguishing porcelain vine from native grapevines can be challenging: both are deciduous woody vines in the *Vitis* family with similar looking leaves; each can grow 15 ft. or more in a single season; stems and leaf stalks on both vines vigorously twine-around any support and use tendrils. But there's no identity question when their fruit appears. Few displays can rival the unique, shiny, upright clusters of quarter-inch pink, lavender, turquoise and blue berries that brilliantly adorn porcelain vine every fall.

Another common name is Amur peppervine, aptly describing the appearance of its pepper-like berries —questionably-edible for humans, but well-appreciated and readily dispersed by birds and animals. Adding to its visual appeal, a variegated-leaf form is often seen (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata* 'Elegans', making its scientific name an even bigger mouthful!).

Control of both oriental bittersweet and porcelain vine can be a major undertaking. Simply applying herbicide to foliage is often ineffective and not recommended. Preventing seed from forming is fundamental to reducing dispersion, so cutting-back vines in summer both reduces opportunity for seed to form and also releases host plants underneath. Once the source of the vine is found, spading-out the root system or applying herbicide directly to stems cut near the ground is the best control method. Unfortunately, because both vines tend to regrow from underground roots (bittersweet roots are bright orange) that break-off when dug or are not controlled by herbicide, the process should be repeated every year.

*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.*

October Recap



Pictured Above: the 2018 Honorary Medals Awardees. Left to right, Bill Cannon, Carol Stocker, Margaret Roach, Karen Perkins, Dale Deppe, Trish Wesley Umbrell, and Betsy Ridge Madsen.

The 118th Honorary Medals Dinner was a success. This tradition awards medals to individuals and organizations for their contributions to excellence in horticulture for the public good. A huge thank you to all who came and congratulations to all of our honorees. If you are interested in joining the medals selection committee, please email elawrence@masshort.org.

Thank you also to all the members who joined us at the 2018 Annual Meeting on October 23. We were thrilled to have so many members come out and share their thoughts on the future of Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

The [Draft Master Plan Executive Summary](#) was distributed at the meeting. Please take a look at this draft, and email us any feedback. Thanks!

November Education Programs

We have lined up a schedule of classes this month for every interest:

Cacti and Succulents: 101

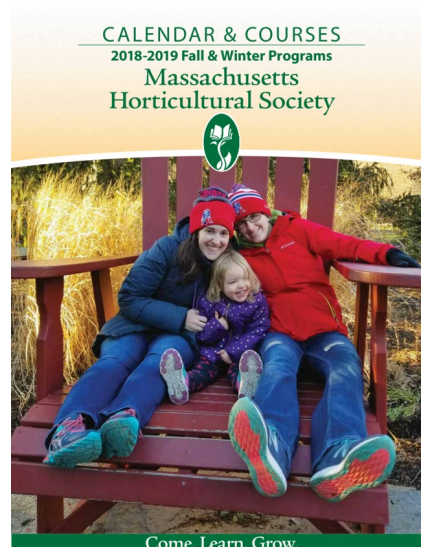
Saturday, November 3, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

There are still spaces left! Founder of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Massachusetts, Art Scarpa will teach you the basics of care for succulents and cacti! Art will bring live plants and describe their care, including light and watering requirements, soil mixes, sources, and lots more. You'll be able to choose the right plants for you and understand the basic care of these wonderful plants. \$12/member [Please Register Here](#), walk-ins welcome.

Ecological Gardening Symposium

Tuesday, November 7, 1 – 5 p.m.

This wonderful program will help you discover new ways to garden, and new plants to select to make your home more sustainable. Read more about the [event online](#), and in this [Leaflet](#)!



America's Romance with the English Garden

Thursday, November 8, 10 a.m. – noon

(social time followed by lecture at 10:30)

Scholar, author, and Master Gardener Thomas J. Mickey will deliver a presentation based on his book, *America's Romance with the English Garden*. He will tell the story of tastemakers and homemakers, of savvy businessmen and a growing American middle class eager to buy their products, as well as the beginnings of the modern garden industry. This presentation is hosted by the New England Unit of the Herb Society of America and is open to Mass Hort members and guests as space allows. \$22/member [Register Here](#).



Floral Design Workshop: Make a Holiday Centerpiece

Tuesday, November 13, 1 – 3:30 p.m.

Our hands-on holiday floral design workshop is fun and informative and offers a wonderful opportunity to learn about floral design. Participants will work with a variety of fresh, seasonal flowers and other fresh and hard materials, discovering how to create a unique design. This hands-on workshop is suitable for both beginners and experienced floral designers. Materials will be provided. \$70/member **Pre-registration required** [Please register here](#).

Herbal Gifts

Tuesday, December 4, 1 – 3 p.m.

In this class with herbalist Karen O'Brien we will make three items that will keep you in the holiday spirit. Make a honey-herb butter for holiday meals, craft a scented cinnamon stick tree, and put together a lavender/lemon salt scrub. Perfect for you or for gift-giving! Learn how to take simple household staples, such as butters, sugars, vinegars, and more and transform them into something special with the addition of fresh herbs, infusing your world with the scents and colors of summer. \$35/member [Sign up today!](#) **Please pre-register**

If there are any class topics you wish to see, let us know by emailing education@masshort.org.

Get Involved at the 10th Annual Festival of Trees and Snow Village!

Get festive with us! The Festival of Trees, Mass Hort's largest mission-supporting fundraiser, would not be possible without the help of many generous volunteers.

This year, we need volunteers to help us check in donated trees, decorate the Hunnewell Building, collect admission fees, register raffle tickets, walk the floor and mind the trains at the Festival. We also need volunteers to help us string the lights, hang wreaths and garland and decorate the grounds and gardens before the Festival. Work alongside Dan Brooks, our Director of Operations, to decorate the outside of the Hunnewell Building, Victorian Lodge, Manor House, and other buildings.



As a volunteer, you get a fascinating look at the show behind the scenes, meet new people, help our fundraiser, and share in the delight and enjoyment of our visitors. We hope you will join us to welcome our guests and make this year's Festival the most successful year yet!

Learn more and [Sign up for Festival of Trees](#) and Snow Village volunteer slot here.

[Sign up here](#) to help with outdoor decorating.

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

educational nonprofit organization.

If you have any questions about volunteering, please contact Amy Rodrigues, Mass Hort's Volunteer Engagement Manager, at arodrigues@masshort.org or 617-933-4934.

Thank you!

Get more info and sign up here!

From the Stacks:

By Maureen T. O'Brien,
Library Manager

"You don't change the course of history by turning the faces of portraits to the wall."
- Jawaharlal Nehru

A portrait is generally an artistic depiction of a person's face and shoulders in a painting, photograph, or sculpture. The Library in Horticultural Hall on Massachusetts Avenue was arrayed with the portraits of important members of the Society. Today, the Library's Collection contains 10 busts and 44 paintings from the old Library. Some were on display in the Education Building at Elm Bank, but others were in storage. Recently the Library Committee decided to investigate these holdings and uncovered what we affectionately call "our dirty old men." See the list [here](#).

These portraits all depict white, wealthy men. But it was these men who had the means and foresight to create the Society and share their scientific findings, love of nature, art and literature with the public. Today, the Society is diverse and continues to adapt to our changing population and mores. As Nehru implies, there is value in maintaining these objects. They represent a period of the Society's history and provide an opportunity not only to honor the founders, but to also appreciate a resource that provides a glimpse into the history, art, mannerisms, and attire of the times. We have installed some of these portraits in the Library for all to enjoy.



Featured Papers

For the Library's Members' Meeting Open House, the Library displayed papers of Robert Manning Sr. (1784-1842) of [Salem](#), Massachusetts. Manning was a founder of the Society and the foremost pomologist in the United States in the early nineteenth century. He searched far and wide and introduced fruits from all over the world that would do well in New England. He pioneered in the cultivation of fruit trees for commercial purposes. Pears were his specialty but he also cultivated many different kinds of fruits—apples, cherries, peaches, and plums. At the time of his death, his pomological garden was the largest in the United States with nearly one thousand varieties of pears and over five hundred other fruits. After his death, his teenaged sons continued his work in the nursery. His son Robert also became an Officer and Librarian of the Society. Robert, Jr.'s portrait was cleaned and now graces the entrance hall to the Education Building. *Trivia Fact re: Manning, Sr:* Manning was Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1804-64) uncle and provided support to Hawthorne's family after his father's untimely death in 1808. It was Manning who insisted that Hawthorne attend college and paid his tuition to Bowdoin College.

The papers include Manning's handwritten manuscript for his important book [The Book of Fruits](#) (Salem: W. S. & B. Ives, 1838), the "superfine" systematic authority on fruit. It contains painstaking descriptions of fruit and was the definitive authority on nomenclature. The manuscript is done in exquisite cursive handwriting and the book contains pen and pencil sketches of identified fruit. It is a pleasure to view such a fine specimen of scientific research.

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 Catherine Mackinnon of Waban Massachusetts for her donation of horticulture and history books.

Come Visit the Library...

The Library is open on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 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. We also have a selection of books on sale at bargain prices as well as some **Free Stuff** in the front hall of the Education Building!

Image: Library Committee Member Jennifer Wilton cleaning one of our "Dirty Old Men", Joseph Breck (1784-1873), nurseryman from Brighton, author, editor of the *New England Farmer*, one of the earliest agricultural magazines in the United States, and President of the Society from 1859 to 1862.



Be Careful What You Wish For

*By Neal Sanders,
Leaflet Contributor*

Be careful what you wish for. It will all come back to bite you in the fall.

This spring I encouraged Betty to plant container gardens... lots and lots of container gardens filled with glorious annuals that allowed us to place points of color all around our landscape. In all, she planted up a dozen 'major' containers and that many 'lesser' pots. In mid-October, a killing frost wiped out those containers. It took half a day to empty them, separate out the spent potting mix from the bottles and such we use as 'ballast', and clean and bleach the containers and store them in the basement so they're ready for next year.

We left a dozen pine trees standing at the edges of our gardens because I wanted tall evergreens with deep green needles to contrast against the snows of winter, or dull browns when the snow has melted. The late October nor'easter deposited several thousand pine cones from those trees onto our garden. Each one had to be picked up by hand and transported to a far edge of the property. Elapsed time? At least two hours.



Both for ecological and aesthetic reasons, I demanded a driveway that would be asphalt-free and allow water to percolate through to replenish the groundwater, rather than adding to what goes down our town's storm drains. This past weekend, I spent two hours raking an inch of leaves and pine needles from the aforementioned nor'easter off our 90-foot-long stone driveway. In the next few weeks, I have to attach skis (quite literally) to the bottom of our snow blower so I can remove the white stuff this winter without picking up buckets full of stones in the process. And, does it take longer to clear a stone driveway than a macadam one? It does, and don't let anyone tell you differently.

Betty said she didn't want any grass in our new garden, and so we planted the half acre that is not wetlands in native trees, shrubs, and perennials. I not only agreed with her on the subject, I *encouraged* it. And I keep urging her to fill in the 'holes' in the landscape with yet more perennials. This fall, I have spent several days cutting back the now-dead stalks on those perennials, bundling them up in tarps, and transporting them to our transfer station for disposal. Betty has spent

even more time trimming back shrubs. I get to bundle up and remove those as well.

I refuse to pay Whole Foods prices for fresh, organically grown vegetables and so we have a plot at our town's Community Garden. The garden has to be tended several hours each week, but it's a small price to pay for placing food on the table that we have, ourselves, grown. However, come October, plants stop producing and fruit stops ripening. There's an arrogant, overbearing 'ogre' who runs the garden and he sends out obnoxious emails telling everyone that must have their plot cleared by the end of the month. And so, on multiple days, Betty and I have taken apart the garden, cleaning and storing the fencing and cages we'll use next year, and taking everything else to the transfer station (the corn stalks alone filled the back end of our Prius to its limit).

The magic question is, of course, why? If it's so much work and backbreaking labor, why not just pay someone to do it for us? Or, more sensibly, stop doing it at all – dispense with the containers, plant some grass, cut down the damnable pines, and pay Whole Foods their extortionate prices? The answer is that I wouldn't change it for the world. I love those 50-pound containers and the unusual plants Betty finds for them. Those pines *do* look majestic against the snow and brighten up our cold, New England winter. That driveway has a distinctive style all its own that further sets our property apart from the 'usual' suburban home, and that all-native and grass-free garden draws compliments that no flower bed out front could possibly get. And pay Whole Foods prices? Never. I'd stop eating first.

Oh, and I'm getting serious exercise doing all this. People 'my age' are supposed to be slowing down and becoming sedentary. I carried 60 pounds of metal stakes in my arms last week and unloaded tarpaulin after tarpaulin filled with plant debris at the transfer station without resorting to pain-relieving drugs. And, on top of that, it's fun. If all those wishes are, in fact, coming back to bite me, I'll just put it down to the price of having a good time.

*Neal Sanders is hard at work on his 13th mystery, many of which have 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*

The 2018 Trial Garden Results

Improving the quality of plants and introducing new plant varieties has been a long standing initiative for Mass Hort since our inception in 1829. To that end, and to this day, we participate actively in evaluating new and experimental plant material, sometimes even before it is made available to the public! We are proud to provide a New England environment testing bed for plant breeders and flower and vegetable companies from all over the world in our Mass Hort Trial Garden. Our capacity to do so is supported by our ability to grow all of the plant material on site in our greenhouses from either seed or rooted cutting.



Therefore, we can acclimate the plant material to our exact growing environment from the very beginning! We are so pleased to share with you some of our favorite plants that have performed so well for us here in The Gardens at Elm Bank! We love growing them and observing how they change day-to-day and season-to-season. All of these were on display throughout our gardens this summer and many of the perennials have been with us for years and can be enjoyed again next year! So without further delay, we are excited to present the Top Ten lists for Annuals, Perennials, and Vegetables from our horticultural staff, David Fiske, Gardens Curator and Head Horticulturist, and Senior Horticulturist Hannah Traggis.

Top Ten Perennials in The Gardens at Elm Bank:

Rudbeckia laciniata 'Herbstsonne':

Hosta 'Autumn Frost':

Echinacea purpurea 'PowWow Wild Berry':
Tradescantia rosea - Spider Wort 'Morning Grace':
Levisticum officinale – Lovage:
Miscanthus sinensis – Maiden Grass 'Bandwidth':
Echinacea purpurea Sombrero 'Granada Gold'
Dianthus hybrida 'Mountain Frost Pink Carpet':
Helianthus salicifolius 'First Light':
Vernonia fasciculata Ironweed

Top Ten Annuals that brightened every day in the gardens:

Firehouse™ Verbena Lavender
Dahlia City Lights™ Golden Yellow
Gomphrena Truffula™ 'Pink'
Angelonia Angelface® 'Wedgewood Blue'
Calibrachoa Superbells® 'Cardinal Star™'
Euphorbia marginata 'Snow on the Mountain'
Lantana Luscious® 'Citrus Blend™'
Hibiscus sabdariffa Cranberry Roselle
Salvia Rockin'® 'Fuchsia'
Calibrachoa Can-Can® 'Pink Flamingo'

Top Ten Vegetables that kept our palates singing this summer:

Capsicum annuum Chili Pepper 'Takanotsume' – Kitazawa Seed Co.
Lactuca sativa Red Butterhead Lettuce 'Skyphos' – Johnny's Selected Seeds
Ocimum basilicum Basil 'Eleonora' – Vitalis Organic Seeds
Ocimum basilicum Basil 'Amazel' – Proven Winners®
Capsicum annuum Sweet Banana Pepper 'Cavalcade F1' – Syngenta Flowers
Sorghum bicolor 'Coral' – Experimental Farm Network
Solanum lycopersicum Tomato 'Calabacita Roja' – Experimental Farm Network
Solanum pimpinellifolium Orange Currant – Adaptive Seeds
Cucumis sativus Cucumber 'Corinto F1' – Johnny's Selected Seeds
Allium cepa Onion 'Rossa di Milano' – Uprising Organic Seeds

For descriptions of these plants, please check out our [website](#)!



November Horticultural Hints

*by Betty Sanders,
Lifetime Master Gardener*

Trees and shrubs. Most years I was you to remember to water trees and bushes in November because they can't take up water once the ground has frozen. However, we are several inches above normal due to our wet summer, and as this is written, awaiting the season's first Nor'easter.

Trees and shrubs won't need your help with water this year, but they still need the usual winter prep. After this storm, check for any broken branches. Prune them out now to prevent further damage.

Let leaves that have fallen around the base of plants stay there—they are Mother Nature's mulch protecting roots. Blowing leaves out of shrubs destroys the habitat for many beneficial insects that winter over in leaf litter and exposes roots to frost and thaw cycles.



Leaves that have fallen on the lawn are best run over by your mulching lawn mower. By spring they will have returned the nutrients they needed to grow to your soil. Your mower should be set at 2 inches for the balance of the season.

Animal repellents (insects aren't a problem now) help deter rabbits, chipmunks, deer and others who find the bark and branch ends tasty eating. I spray Bobbex (available at nurseries and online) monthly to convince critters to dine elsewhere.

The **UMass soil test lab** is not busy now so it is an **excellent time to get your soil samples** off to them. Do it now and, in the spring, you won't be waiting for the information with everyone else. You should do a soil test every three years for an established lawn or garden. For my new gardens, I do each one every year for three years.

Finish the clean-up of vegetable gardens to prevent disease or troublesome insects from overwintering in old vines, weeds, stalks and other debris. Once the top few inches of soil freeze, your clean-up window has closed.

Avoid 'plant mush' next spring by removing frost-killed annuals from your gardens. Similarly, when your hostas get hit by a hard frost and collapse, cut them to the ground. And clean out and store containers that had been filled with annuals for the winter. If you want to re-create one of your outdoor containers from this year, make notes of what were in the pot and put in your 2019 calendar for April or May.

Now is the time to prune down rose canes, buddleia bushes and grape vines.

Clean up bird feeders and bird boxes before the weather get colder. This year we saw a number of migrating birds stop by to fuel up before continuing their migration. A steady supply of food means steady entertainment from the year-round residents through the winter.

Plant paperwhite narcissus this month to brighten your home this winter. They also make great holiday gifts.

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

Connect with us



www.MassHort.org - 617-933-4900