



# Leaflet

A MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION



**AUGUST 2022**



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## A NOTE ON BRESSINGHAM GARDEN...

Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Bressingham Garden, designed by famed British nurseryman and designer Adrian Bloom was at the cutting edge of planting design when it was installed in 2007. The design, featuring massed perennials woven through curvilinear beds with evergreen and woody structure is a favorite of our garden visitors. The occasion of its planting was a day still widely remembered at MHS, with over 200 volunteers completing much of the massive installation on a single 97 degree day. Since its planting, the garden has been tended by a series of horticulturists and volunteers and has been looked in on periodically by Adrian. Even as the garden has matured into splendor as a whole, individual elements have faded, while others have become over-dominant, and it is time for a careful refresh.

During the last 15 years, some of the bands of perennials have disappeared while other plantings have overtaken the design. For example, plants like *Fargesia* have grown incredibly large and have begun to shade out the *Sciadopytis* and *Hackonechloa* while the thick band of *Geranium* 'Rozanne,' designed to weave through the border, no longer exists. Plantings have overtaken irrigation valve boxes and sprinkler heads. The goal of the project is to restore the original design intent with the best perennials available today.

### Our steps will be:

- Completion of a planting audit to confirm original and current plantings.
- Assessment of suitability of missing or over-dominant plants.
- Comparison of available alternatives with the original design intent relating to form, color, and texture of what Adrian originally specified and a search for the best available plant for each role.
- Deep weeding and, where possible, soil assessment and amendments.
- We've initiated accounts with large wholesale perennial nurseries who will deliver truckloads of perennials to us this fall, and we've begun scheduling volunteer workdays so that the plants can be sorted, placed, and planted at the optimal time this fall.
- While the garden beds are being prepared for perennials, the team is mapping, making repairs to, and making minor updates to the irrigation.

The upgrades will solidify the design intent, refresh the garden, and bring the garden back to its rightful standing as it gracefully matures. I know that this is an important garden for many of our members and am delighted that we are giving it the attention it deserves. Please watch over coming weeks and into fall for opportunities to volunteer and support this project directly. I trust that you have enjoyed the wonderful summer we are having but are eager, like us, for a cooler gardening season shortly to be upon us.

James Hearsom  
President & Executive Director

LEARN MORE  
AND DONATE



# UPCOMING IN THE GARDEN



**Mah Jongg in the Garden**  
EVERY WEDNESDAY AT 1PM  
August 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31



**Houseplant Emergency Room**  
August 11, 10am-1pm



**Sansevieria Pop-Up Class**  
August 16, 10am-1pm



**Late Nights in the Garden**  
August 18, 4-8pm



**Music in the Garden Summer Concert Series**  
August 21, 7-8:30pm



**Seeing the Invisible**  
Open with Garden Hours  
Mon-Thurs 10am-7pm  
Fri-Sun 10am-4pm



**Garden Tails Story Time**  
Mondays and Wednesdays  
11-11:30am



**Family Fun in the Garden**  
Saturdays  
10am-noon

## GREEN PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Flash your membership card for a 10% discount with any of our Green Partners.



**VIEW AUGUST CALENDAR**



# FESTIVAL OF TREES

We can't wait to see all of the beautiful tree donations this year, from previous and new donors alike! So get your minds in a festive spirit and start thinking of your tree ideas. You can sign up to donate (even if you don't have your tree theme yet!) by filling out the form on our website. Contact [festivaloftrees@masshort.org](mailto:festivaloftrees@masshort.org) with any questions!



## Learn about the invasive spotted lanternfly (and earn FREE continuing education credits (CEUs)!!!!!!!!!!!!)



Sign up for our FREE quarterly webinar series to get the most up-to-date info about Spotted Lanternfly in Massachusetts. Learn about current control efforts, and how you can help.

Spotted lanternfly is a growing threat to MA's environment and economy, and you are an important first line of defense!

Each session is approved for the following: 1 Mass. Pesticide License credit (all categories and license types), 1 MCA credit, 1 MCH credit, 1 MCLP credit, ½ MQTW credit, 1 Forester License credit, ¾ ISA credit.

Webinars will be held quarterly from 10:00-11:10AM on:  
5/18/22, 8/17/22, 11/16/22, 2/15/23

Aug 17th registration link: <https://bit.ly/MDARSLFWebAug22>

Email [jennifer.forman-orth@mass.gov](mailto:jennifer.forman-orth@mass.gov) with any questions



# SUMMER HARVEST EVENT

## Food Truck & Raw Honey Tasting

Aug 12 & 13  
10-4pm

- Come enjoy honey from all over New England!
- Try out our first harvest from right here in the Garden!
- Eat some of our world famous honey grilled cheeses!
- Learn about BeeWell Box & all things bees!



Popup Market Featuring:  
Bees & Thank You Food Truck  
BeeWell Box  
Studio Argila



Massachusetts Horticultural Society  
The Garden At Elm Bank  
900 Washington St Wellesley, MA 02482

Come for an afternoon of good food and learn about some of the many benefits of honey and all things bees!

In April 2022, Bees and Thank You and BeeWell Box installed two new bee hives in the Garden at Elm Bank. We have already split both hives, making a total of four at the Garden. We hope to expand more as the year progresses.

### HONEY TASTING

We will showcase a variety of honey harvested from our own and partner farms around New England! Of course, we will also have honey from right here in the Garden! Our goal is to educate people about the advantages of eating honey throughout the Northeast Region, as the plants and species native to the area have changed, and we are also a more migratory society.

### FOOD TRUCK

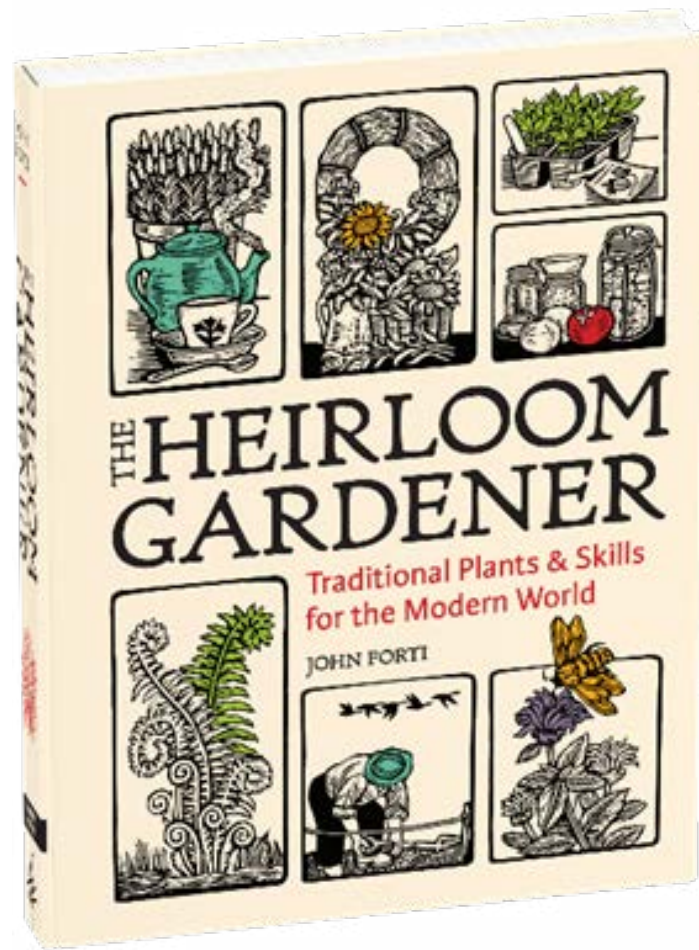
Bees and Thank You will be serving our world famous honey grilled cheese and we will be using honey from right in the Garden on every Grilled Cheese Sandwich sold!

There will also be vendors set up selling local handmade products.



# Floriculture

## An Excerpt from *The Heirloom Gardener* by John Forti



When Timber Press asked me to write a book on garden history, I didn't want to write another book about Lancelot 'Capability' Brown or the Olmstedes. I have always been more interested in exploring ordinary lives, and the ways by which most of our ancestors worked to improve their lot in life with a handful of seeds, improved soil

and pass-along plants that fed, medicated and beautified our daily lives.

When we scratch the surface of gardening as a craft, it is evident that women have held the most significant role in this branch of horticulture throughout most of our history. Not only did these homespun garden arts teach us how to live more richly through horticulture, but they managed to keep many of our most treasured homestead arts alive through the industrial age.

When I was the Director of Horticulture and Education for Massachusetts Horticultural

Society, one of the first garden enhancements I made was to quietly plant an honor garden in front of the 3 goddess statues that once stood atop Horticulture Hall. The ancients recognized Ceres, Pomona and Flora for giving us the fruits of agriculture that made life a garden, but I also understood that there were genera-

tions of women behind the success and survival of MHS that had (as was all too common throughout recorded history) gone unrecognized. So when Wayne asked me to write a piece for the *Leaflet*, a publication I had been reading since I was a curious child, I wanted to offer up a piece I wrote about Floriculture from my new book "The Heirloom Gardener - Traditional Plants and Skills for the Modern World". Perhaps as gardeners we can make a difference by celebrating a more inclusive history, a more biodiverse landscape, and by cultivating common ground where we can sow the seeds of a brighter future.

### FLORICULTURE

Excerpted from *The Heirloom Gardener - Traditional Plants and Skills for the Modern World* by John Forti

When I was younger, I thought of floriculture as the weakest branch of the botanical sciences. The grandmother of horticulture. The doting aunt of agriculture. A sentimental Victorian arranging flowers for her garden club. Botany was then the only "appropriate" science for genteel ladies. But fast forward a century: women who held their spot in the workplace after World War II were thrilled that canned peas were available to serve year-round. What was the point of delivering homemade niceties to a family convinced that TV dinners were the bee's knees and that Birds Eye did it better? Commercial culture tried hard to create the image of the perfect wife, mother, and consumer. Feminism and

"having it all"—holding down a job, raising kids, preparing meals, doing laundry—didn't leave a lot of room for Aunt Flora to arrange flowers, make hollyhock dolls, and overwinter dahlias. And video games and home computers further distanced children and families from the natural world.

Happily, wise and passionate floricultural friends took up Flora's mantle, planting seeds that helped create a generational shift. Women like Sharon Lovejoy (whose books introduced nature crafts to a new generation), Jane Taylor (matriarch of 21st-century children's gardens), Alice Waters (who revived the school gardens movement), Betsy Williams and Tracy Kane (who did the same for fairy houses). All had a common goal: to get families out from behind blue screens and back into green landscapes, where they could connect in a frequently disconnected world and share experiences that are not for sale.

When I first began my work as Horticulturist at Plimoth Plantation, few were teaching floral garden craft. Adelma Simmons and her Caprilands Herb Farm and some old-time garden club and herb society ladies seemed like vestiges, their lives centered around homes and gardens that they enhanced with seasonal garlands, floral potpourri, and lavender wands; they hosted high teas with floral butters, confections, and cordials that reminded us that life, like floriculture, has its sweetness too. It felt almost as



if they had turned back the clock, to a



Top down: John serving up botanical cordials for an Herb Society conference at MHS; John in the Goddess Garden; Flora by Mary Azarian.

time before world wars and economic depression.

When Martha Stewart arrived on the scene, many of my friends resented her deeply: they came from generations that knew the pressures and strains of underappreciated career women, striving to keep up at home. But some saw and valued a talented woman turning floriculture into a lifestyle brand. Over time, I came to credit Martha, Adelma, and all the quietly determined women who preceded them for preserving and reigniting connections to garden and environment that were in danger of becoming lost arts. In an age of consumerism, they reminded us that we enjoy a greater quality of life when we live and craft from a garden—and that there is joy in the process, too.

Floriculture today means that our salves, salads, and cocktails are enriched with edible and medicinal flowers; that our participation in a “slow flower” movement is bringing back a locally grown florist trade; that we can fill our gardens with native wildflowers readily available from new specialty nurseries and farmers markets. It means a child can learn to value his great-grandmother’s iris more than out-of-season lilies from Chile or the Netherlands. And that an endangered pollinator will once again land on a native plant it had relied upon for millennia. Floriculture inspires an elementary school science class to visit their courtyard garden to study the parts of a flower and carry

chive blossoms and rose petals back to the lunch room salad bar.

For me, it means that I don’t just pinch off *Salvia officinalis* blossoms and toss them on the compost pile, I use them to make sage butter. I also make lavender soap, violet syrup, and floral ice cubes. I distill passing roses into rosewater, brew beer with the flowers of alehoof (*Glechoma hederacea*), and make vegetarian rennet for cheese with the flowers of lady’s bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and skin ointment from *Calendula officinalis*.

A renewed appreciation for floriculture reflects the world’s readiness for more feminine energy—witness artists like Whitney Krueger and Andy Goldsworthy, whose ephemeral creations would have been labeled flights of fancy in the patriarchal industrial age. If we pay attention, Flora’s subtle charms—swags, nosegays, strewing herbs, flower petal mandalas—can entice us to play in the natural world. If we don’t pay attention, we will miss a world of fragrance, beauty, and fleeting moments that we were born to enjoy.

These days, as I bask in my floriferous summer garden, sipping tea of clover blossom, mint, and bee balm flow-

ers, I raise a cup in honor of Adelma Simmons, Martha Stewart, favorite garden club aunties, groundbreaking friends, \*[the community of goddesses who helped to save MHS, led by former board chair Jeanne Leszczynski] . . . and the goddess Flora.

These days, we all need some good news and a way to participate in meaningful change. *The Heirloom Gardener - Traditional Plants and Skills for the Modern World* is a book for gardeners who want to deepen their knowledge and improve life for families, pollinators and wildlife in their own backyards. It’s a love poem to the earth; a map to the art of living intentionally and a guidepost for environmental gardeners and artisans. It unearths old-ways, storied plants and artisanal life-skills; like seed-saving, herbalism, foraging, distillation, ethnobotany and organics which contribute to a new 21st century arts and crafts movement. With woodcuts from Caldecott Medal VT artist Mary Azarian, *The Heirloom Gardener* offers a dose of wild hope for a weary nation.

[John Forti](#) is a garden historian and ethnobotanist who has directed gardens for Plimoth Plantation Museum, Strawberry Banke Museum, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and Bedrock Gardens. As a Slow Food USA Governor and biodiversity specialist, his preservation work has helped to restore countless native and heirloom plants and has brought traditional artisanal practices to modern thinking. He has won numerous awards for historic garden preservation, children’s garden design, herbal and historical education and the 2021 Award of Excellence from National Garden Clubs. His new book “The Heirloom Gardener” was inspired by his posts as The Heirloom Gardener - John Forti which go out regularly to millions on Facebook.



# CHESTNUTS ARE BAAAACK!

By Lois & Denis Melican

*All words about the American chestnut are now but an elegy for it. This once mighty tree, one of the grandest features of our sylvia, has gone down like a slaughtered army before a foreign fungus disease, the Chestnut blight. In the youth of a man not yet old, native chestnut was still to be seen in glorious array, from the upper slopes of Mount Mitchell, the great forest below waving with creamy white Chestnut blossoms in the crowns of the ancient trees, so that it looked like a sea with white combers plowing across its surface. Gone forever is that day; gone is one of our most valuable timber trees, gone the beauty of its shade, the spectacle of its enormous trunks sometimes ten to twelve feet in diameter. And gone the harvest of the nuts that stuffed our Thanksgiving turkey or warmed our hearts and fingers at the vendor's street corner.*

Donald Culross Peattie  
(1898 – 1964)

American naturalist,  
author *A Natural History of  
Trees of Eastern and Central  
North America* (1948)



Chestnut logging in Rutland, MA, 1890

Donald Culross Peattie expressed with such eloquence and sympathy the profound sadness that so many Americans felt about the loss of the chestnut during the first half of the twentieth century. Seventy-four years have passed since these words were written and we couldn't be happier to share the long overdue good news about the incredible progress that's being made to restore pure American chestnuts (or a reasonable facsimile thereof) to our forests as well as introducing hybrid chestnuts to our back yards and dinner tables!

Perhaps some people have become aware of the breeding program of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF.) Three back cross generations and two intercrosses creates a chestnut that is 93.75% American with the remainder of Chinese genes that confer a level of blight tolerance. If you're interested in seeing one of the

best examples of this progress you would be well advised to visit the orchard at the MassWildlife Headquarters in Westborough behind the main-

tenance building.

The plan for the MassWildlife orchard, as we understand, is that the 6,000 trees there will be challenged with blight inoculations expecting that only about 40 or so will eventually be selected. Those 40 trees, however, will be not unlike an all-star team, functioning as a seed pro-

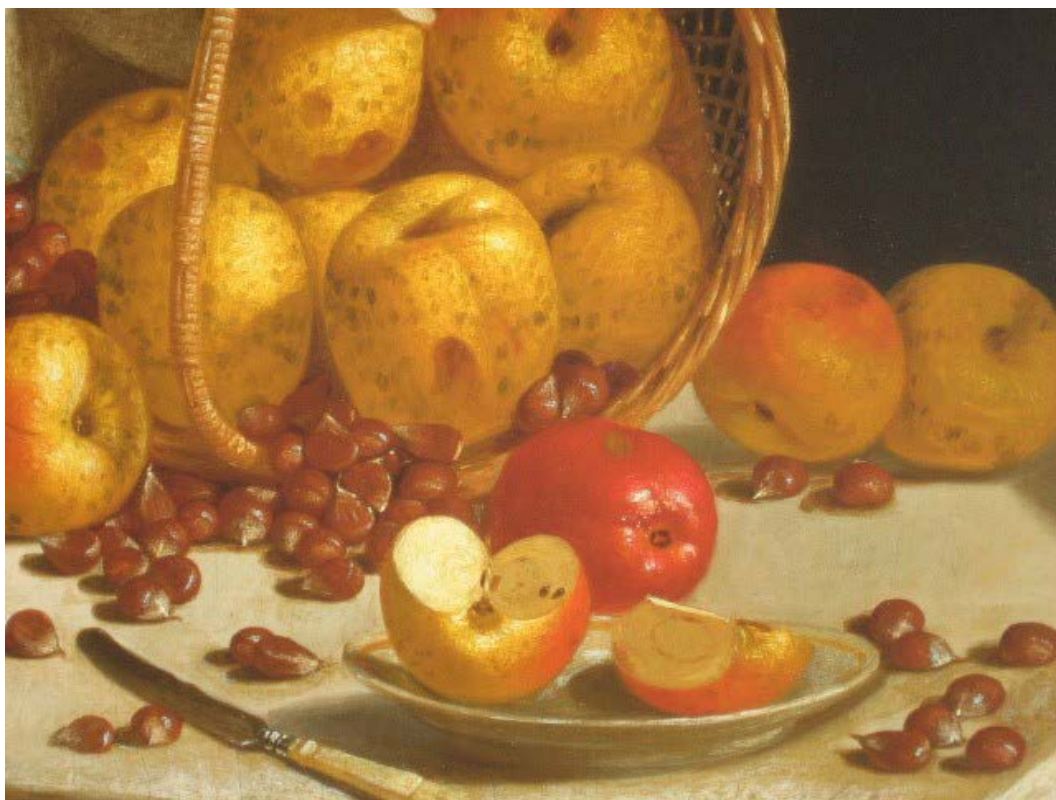


MassWildlife Seed Production Orchard (below)

ACCF fall harvest (above)







Apples & Chestnuts by John F. Francis (1859), courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts Boston

duction orchard that will provide high quality chestnuts to be planted in their 220,000+ acres of Wildlife Management Areas across Massachusetts. Knowing MassWildlife's work ethic we have full confidence in their ability to reintroduce chestnut trees in such a way that they will be able to thrive, evolve and reproduce in a natural forest setting.

Less well known, but just as consequential, is the work that the American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation (ACCF) has been doing, using only pure Americans. Last fall we travelled to SW Virginia to help with the harvest at one of their orchards on US Forest Service land in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The orchard we worked in was very healthy and productive. We

have begun to distribute the seedlings from our Virginia trip to the local land trust community as well as the 8,000-acre Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary in Wales, MA.

Although restoration of a tall timber type American chestnut tree to the forests is very exciting, so too is the increasing interest in the varieties of chestnut hybrids that are now becoming available. Today's chestnut breeders benefit from the work done by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, which since 1930 has managed the longest continuous breeding program in the country.

These highly blight tolerant hybrid chestnuts, which are more like orchard trees than forest trees, reli-

ably produce nuts that are large and tasty beginning at a relatively young age. There are encouraging signs that Massachusetts farmers are already engaged in growing chestnuts as a commercial crop. For example, Sunset Farm in Amherst has been growing Dunstan chestnuts along with organic vegetables for several decades now and has a decidedly loyal consumer base.

Western Mass can also take pride in Big River Chestnuts in Sunderland and Carr's Cider House and Preservation Orchard in Hadley, both utilizing Chinese chestnut hybrids. They show the level of interest informed consumers have in this emerging market. Western Mass is so beautiful that there are many reasons to visit in the fall, but to be able to return with fresh chestnuts is yet another. We hope that central and eastern Mass residents will visit these orchards and become inspired to follow their lead so that people in every region of the state will have access to an increasing amount of fresh local chestnuts every year.

Unfortunately, most people today associate chestnuts with Nat King Cole's classic "The Christmas Song" and mistakenly believe that roasting chestnuts was the only way that they could be enjoyed. Chestnut's versatility as a food makes them so much more than that! Chestnuts are truly a nutritional powerhouse. They are so low in fat

and calories compared to other nuts they could be called "the un-nut." They are gluten free and loaded with complex carbohydrates. An interesting fact is that these are the only nut that is a significant source of vitamin C.

Chestnuts seem to augment the flavor of anything they're added to as well as boosting its nutritional profile. My favorite recipe is maple glazed pan roasted brussels sprouts with chestnuts and bacon. My second favorite would be chocolate chestnut ice cream! Chestnuts as a super food points to the bounty of nature and would be an excellent addition to anyone's garden.

Chestnuts are indeed BAAAACK and we think that if he were with us now, Mr. Peattie would be smiling all day long!

*There is something singularly refreshing in the color of this nut, the chestnut color. No wonder it gives its name to a color.*  
Henry David Thoreau, 1852



In 2003 Lois & Denis Melican planted the first chestnut orchard on state land in Massachusetts at Moore State Park in Paxton. Presently they volunteer for the American Chestnut Cooperators' Foundation, the Tantasqua Jr H.S. Chestnut Orchard, the Flynt Park Chestnut Forest Project in Monson and Green Hill Park and the Hadwen Arboretum, both in Worcester. They are also active members of the Mass Chapter of The American Rhododendron Society.



# Of Books and Gardens: The London Garden Museum's Literary Festival

Review by Patrice Todisco



*Constance Villiers Stuart in Pursuit of Paradise* by Mary Ann Prior  
(256pp., Unicorn, \$36)

*Miss Willmott's Ghosts: The Extraordinary Life and Gardens of a Forgotten Genius* by Sandra Lawrence  
(410pp., Blink Publishing, \$25)

*English Garden Eccentrics: Three Hundred Years of Extraordinary Groves, Burrowings, Mountains and Menageries* by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan  
(400pp., Yale University Press, \$40)

In 46 B.C. the Roman statesman, orator, and writer Cicero wrote to his friend Varro requesting a meeting. His letter included the sentiment, "If you have a garden in your library everything will be complete." Throughout the years, this has been adapted to the oft-quoted phrase, "If you have a garden and a library, you have ev-

erything you need."

Whether or not this is the first reference to the relationship of books and gardens, I am uncertain. What is certain, however, is that for centuries gardens and gardening have been written about in multiple literary genres including design, art, botany,



Garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith leads a tour



and BBC broadcaster Alan Titchmarsh. During the two-day festival twenty-eight presenters were featured at two venues simultaneously—the historic theater and south lawn.

memoir, and fiction. All are celebrated at the [Garden Museum](#) Literary Festival in London, which I attended in June.

The festival is held in a different garden each year and is billed as the only one that is dedicated solely to writing inspired by gardens. The program is informed by the festival's location, highlighting the sense of place of each property. This year the festival took place at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, where recent projects by garden designers Dan Pearson and Tom Stuart-Smith were featured, including Stuart-Smith's reimagining of the rock garden, designed by Joseph Paxton beginning in 1842.

Both Stuart-Smith and Pearson were in attendance, along with the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire (who greeted the attendees daily), and spoke, along with Steve Porter, head of gardens and landscape at Chatsworth with well-known gardener, author,



Maze at Chatsworth House

Choosing where to be and who to see provided the occasional dilemma. Luciano Giubbilei or Marta McDowell? Mary Keen or Shane Connolly? And then there were the tours of the garden and Chatsworth House with its art collection that spans 4,000 years and includes masterpieces by Rembrandt, Reynolds and Veronese as well as works by modern artists, such as Lucian Freud, Edmund de Waal and David Nash. I am embarrassed to admit that I dashed through the house in just over an hour, taking a short cut (with another literary festival attend-



300-year-old water cascade at Chatsworth



ee) through the gift shop on the afternoon of the second day.

Chatsworth has been handed down through 16 generations of the Cavendish family and the 1,822-acre landscape is the product of nearly five hundred years of cultivation. Between 1760 and 1764, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown transformed a working farmland into parkland, framing the arrival sequence with carriage drives, a lake and artfully arranged trees.

One hundred and five acres are 'gardened' by a team of 20 gardeners, 3 trainees, and 50 volunteers. These include a maze, a kitchen and cutting garden (Chatsworth grows all its own food), rose, cottage and sensory gardens, a new meadow glade and the redesigned rock garden. More than five miles of walks feature rare trees, shrubs, streams, and ponds and more

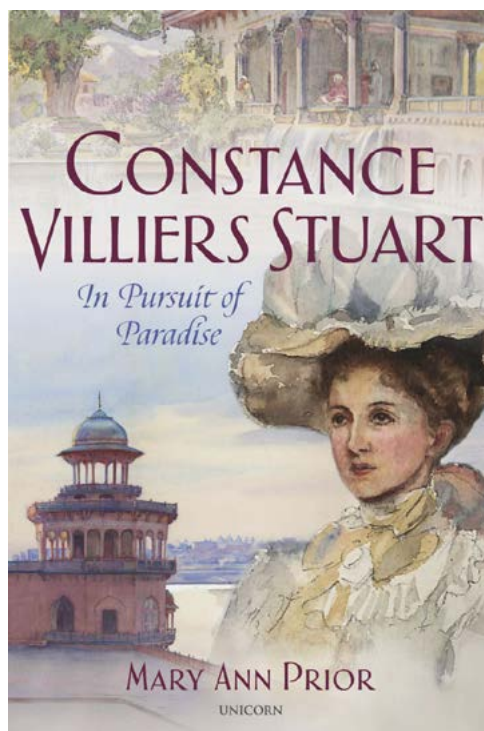
than 300,000 plants, including hundreds of new trees, that have been added across the garden in recent design projects.

The iconic 300-year-old water cascade is a defining feature in the garden. Dating from 1708, the current cascade is built on the site of the original 1696 design executed by a French hydraulics engineer who worked for Louis XIV of France. At its summit is the ornamented Cascade House, a favorite spot for both views and photos. I had the pleasure of meeting Hopwood DePree, here, a festival presenter whose book, *Downton Shabby: One American's Ultimate DIY Adventure Restoring His Family's English Castle*, was, unbeknownst to me, featured in the *New York Times* the day before.

And that brings me back to books and the magic of attending the literary festival, where kindred spirits abound. As they do not issue name tags, you never know who you are talking to (unless you attended their presentation or scoped them out on the back of a book cover, should a book be handy, and they have not aged). Well-known garden designers and authors pres-

ent alongside newly emerging voices, ensuring an engaging mix of perspectives and personalities. Here are a few personalities I met through the books written about them.

Internationally recognized expert and connoisseur Constance Villiers Stuart traveled the world, exploring and writing about gardens. An accomplished artist, Villiers Stuart spent many years in India, studying its gardens and campaigning for the preservation, restoration and continued use of Indian heritage sites. *Gardens of the Great Mughals*, written in 1913, is one of the earliest books on the topic and remains in print, reissued as recently as 2018.



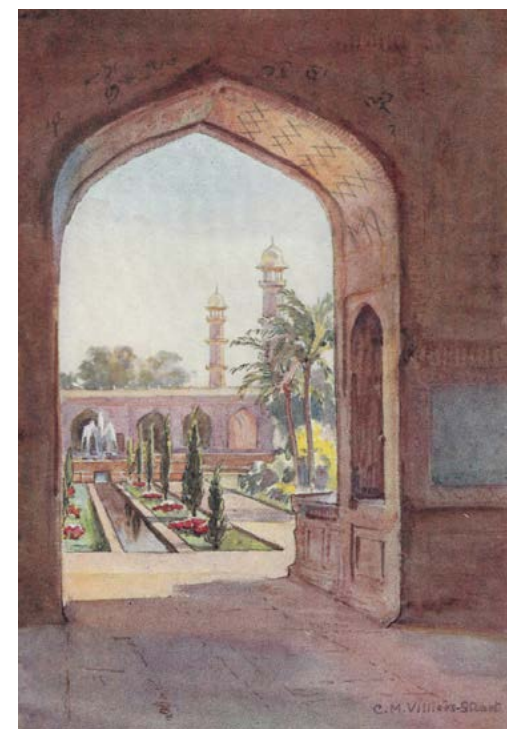
Traveling in India in 2010, Mary Ann Prior used *Gardens of the Great Mughals* as a guide. A chance encounter with Villiers Stuart's daughter seven years later, provided access

to Villiers Stuart's personal archive, untouched since her death in 1966. With this primary documentation as a foundation, *Constance Villiers Stuart in Pursuit of Paradise* rescues the erudite, accomplished and determined Villiers Stuart from obscurity.

A woman of means and social standing, Villiers Stuart's nomadic life was

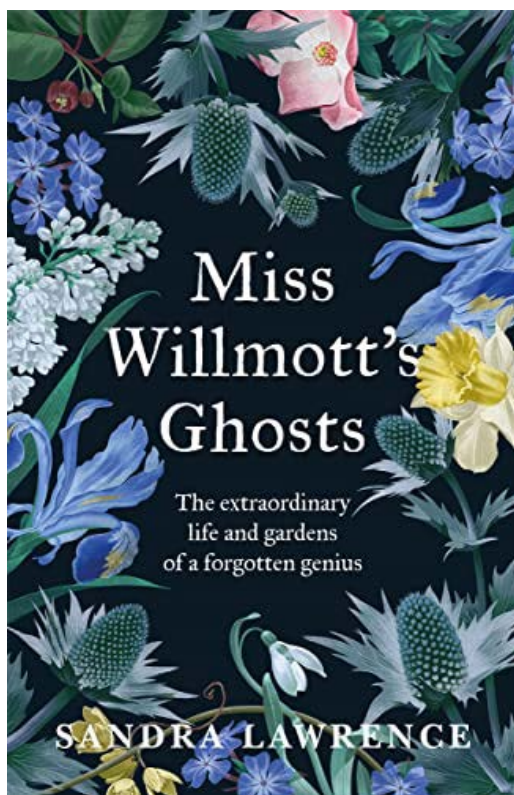
grounded in Beachamwell Hall, her family's 4,000-acre estate in Norfolk. Her far-flung career as an author, journalist, artist, photographer, floral arranger, and open space advocate, while supported by her affluence, was rooted in her extraordinary work ethic. In later years Villiers Stuart lectured widely, including a 1956 presentation to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society at age 80 on "Portuguese and Spanish Garden Design."

Prior, is both broad and selective with Villiers Stuart's story, placing her work firmly in the era and social strata from which she evolved. She is careful to share both her strengths and weaknesses. In *Miss Willmott's Ghosts: The Extraordinary Life and Gardens of a Forgotten Genius*, Sandra Lawrence tells a similar story also inspired by the discovery of never-be-



Shah-Dara (1911) by Constance Villiers Stuart





fore-seen archival materials rescued from a damp basement at the soon to be dismantled Berkley Castle.

Described as a polymath, Ellen Willmott, was complex, talented, and eccentric. An influential horticulturalist and photographer, she cultivated more than 100,000 species and cultivars of plants, sponsored expeditions to discover new species with, among others, Charles Springer Sargent of the Arnold Arboretum and was a recipient of the first Victoria Medal of Honour awarded to a horticulturalist living in the UK (whose award ceremony she did not, scandalously, attend). More than 60 plants have been named after her or her home, Warley Place.

Willmott owned celebrated gardens in England, Italy and France and published extensively, including her magnum opus *Genus Rosa*, a twenty-part definitive exploration of the rose family in the early twentieth century. At a time when the role of women in the horticultural world was evolving, Willmott was one of the first 15 women members elected to The Linnean Society of London and an influential member of the Royal Horticultural Society.

However, her reputation has fallen into disregard and accomplishments overshadowed by her 'prickly personality,' so much so that she is alleged to have secretly sowed seeds of the giant prickly thistle *Eryngium giganteum*, commonly named "Miss Willmott's

Ghost," when visiting others' gardens. What is true is that her vast inherited fortune was mismanaged, and she did not retain ownership of her properties, gardens, and seminal plant collections, many of which were vandalized or destroyed.

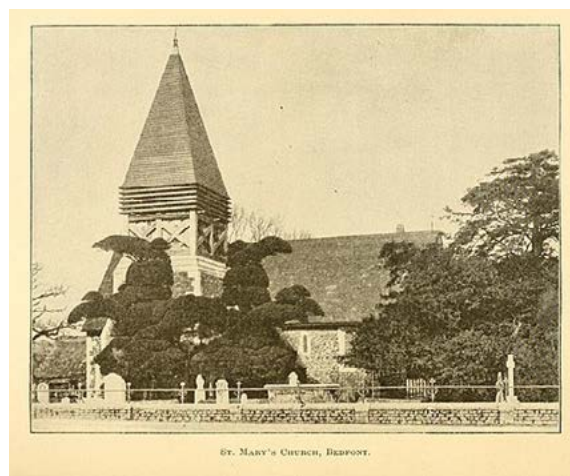
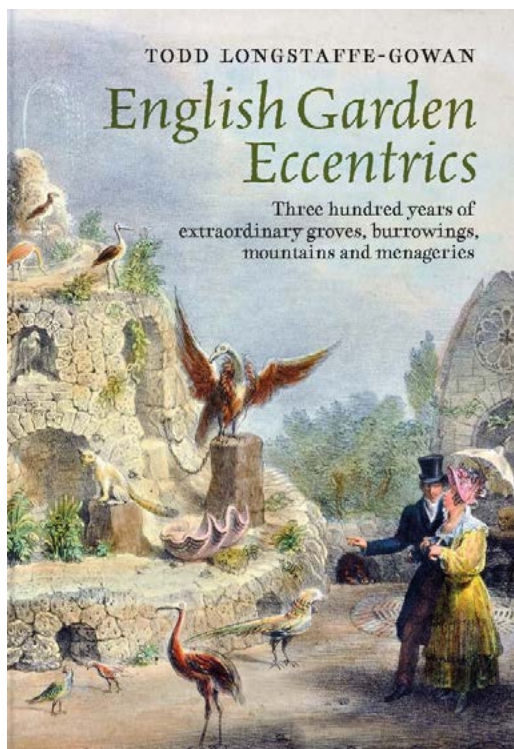
*Miss Willmott's Ghosts* is not a traditional garden history or biography. Neither is *English Garden Eccentrics: Three Hundred Years of Extraordinary Groves, Burrowings, Mountains and Menageries* by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan. Profiled are 21 eccentrics and/or eccentricities which Longstaffe-Gowan describes as people who are not of their time and may be either trapped in the past or looking to the future. Either way, gardening may have induced within them at best, a playful incipient lunacy or at the worst, dangerous excessiveness.

And while Ellen Willmott, whose excesses were legendary, is not included in the lot, a chapter is devoted to Friar Park, Henley-on-Thames, and its creator, Frank Crisp, a wealthy lawyer, and passionate microscope addict, who was a colleague, advisor, and fellow alpinist. At Friar Park, Crisp built extensive gardens which included a maze, Japanese, Dutch and Elizabethan Gardens, Nebuchadnezzar's 'garden of the Grasses' dated 570 B.C. and a garden of conifers in imitative and grotesque shapes, interspersed with sun dials. However, it was his four-acre Alpine Garden, complete with an exact miniature model of the Matterhorn, for which the garden was

most well-known. Willmott, whose first gardening project at age 21 was a rock garden, supplied Crisp with plant material for Friar Park, later becoming embroiled in a public spat of sorts regarding the garden's integrity.

The gardeners highlighted in *English Garden Eccentrics* share an unbridled passion for their endeavors, which functions as a form of autobiography. Dynamic and lacking finitude, their gardens are presented as works in progress, a canvas where self-expression intersects with interest, even if that interest becomes an obsession.

There are glaciers, grottos, exotic groves, rockeries, tunnels, curiosities, and topiary, including the Eagle Walk at Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire (complete with cages reportedly occupied with the real thing) and two giant clipped yews shaped like peacocks that survive today in suburban London. Located a "stone's throw from Heathrow airport," they are purported to represent two haughty sisters as depicted by a rejected suitor by way of revenge.



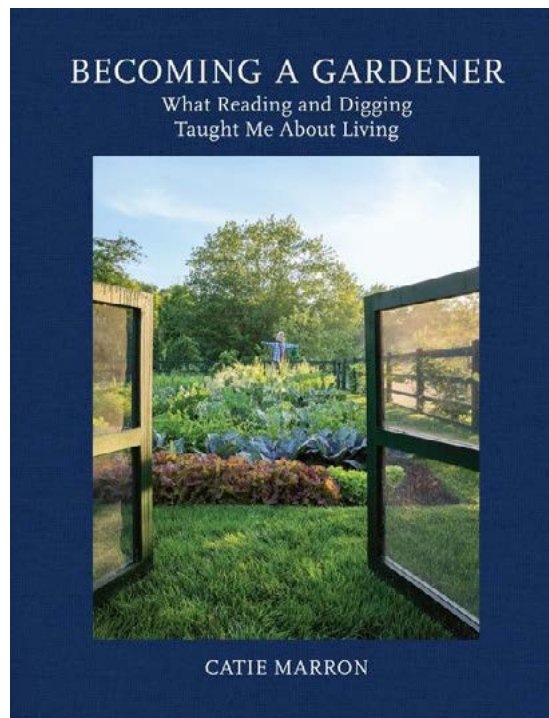




Extensively illustrated, *English Garden Eccentrics* concludes with the story of Mabel Balthrop, whose belief in transcendence led her to create not just a garden but an entire community in Bedfordshire modeled after the Garden of Eden. Here, she and her followers awaited the second coming of Christ and immortal life. Such visions aside, Longstaffe-Gowan reminds us that alas, gardens are ephemeral creations and their fleeting qualities are both alluring and poignant. Immortal they, like their creators, are not.

#### An End Note:

Two American authors, Marta McDowell and Catie Marron, whose books I have reviewed for the *Leaflet*, presented at the Garden Museum Literary Festival. McDowell spoke on *Unearthing The Secret Garden: The Plants & Places That Inspired Fran-*



*ces Hodgson Burnett* (320pp., Timber Press, \$29.95). The Garden Museum's interactive summer exhibition, on view through September, celebrates *The Secret Garden*. McDowell's newest book, about gardening themes in crime fiction, is due out in 2023.

Catie Marron, whose previous books have focused on city squares and city parks, presented *Becoming A Gardener: What Digging and Reading Taught Me About Living* (256pp., Harper Collins, \$60.00) chronicling her eighteenth month journey to design and install a garden at her Connecticut home. Turning to her library of gardening books for inspiration, Marron imagines a dialogue with these literary mentors, whose wisdom is coupled with the hands-on advice about how to create a garden.

# And so it was...

By John Lee

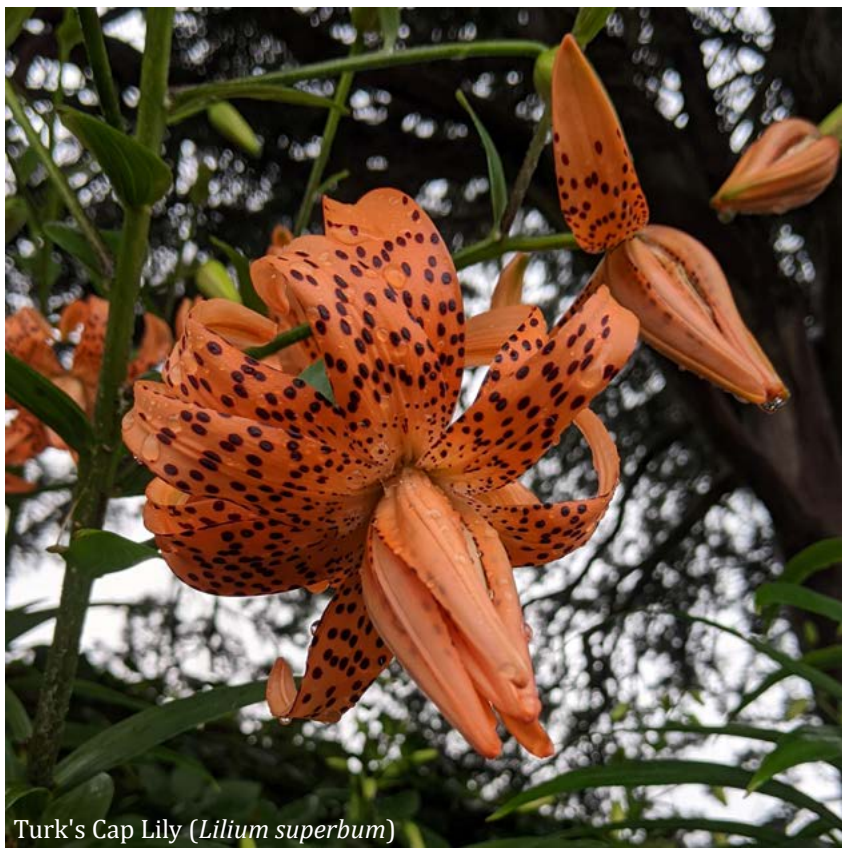
And so it was, as they said in the Good Book, that time pressed on and the over-zealous gardeners in their neighborhood began to look with shock and awe at the burgeoning efflorescence that had once been imagined as a simple gardening project up and down the road. It appeared that the neighborhood had a been competing surreptitiously to spruce up their frontages lest another neighbor cavy behind their back. One of the truisms about looking into another person's garden is that, as natural as weeds, whispering starts and, as folks used to say, 'no good deed goes unpunished'. Many of the newer plantings were clearly over-wrought. It was as if, after moving into a new home, the residents had bought too much furniture and there was some serious form and function mismatching for all to kibb-itz about.

This gardening life seemed not so simple as the late-July/early August flush of flowers, fruits and vegetables began to look more burdensome than miraculous. What had begun as tidy plantings carefully, if unartfully, laid out, were now a jungle, a riot of clashing colors because as soon as something failed, there was a trip to the nearest garden center to procure anything up-potted and in bloom. Gasp-ing plantings of 4" *Viola tricolor* 'Terminalis' (aka "Dying pansies" *par ex.*) was soon replaced by one-gallon *Rud-*

*beckia* (var. "Extra-Large and Loud") which rubbed elbows with an inadvertent and ill-advised mass-planting of *Tradescantia* (var. 'Wanton Weed'). 'It thrived everywhere so why not in the garden?' apparently was the benighted inspiration. As new homes sprang up, it seemed there were only two styles of home garden horticulture – sparse+bark mulch or pandemonium – perhaps benign neglect or colourful chaos.

Up the lane, peace reigned in Brenda's gardens – no jarring color discord, no tortuous bark mulch fringes and seemingly no noticeable effort in the creation of a harmonic landscape. To some, this seemed miraculous and, more to the point, seemed to warrant no judgement on the part of those lucky enough to share in the prospect. In keeping with tradition, Brenda's most beloved gardens tended toward subtle pastels punctuated with native daisies. Sweet William, New England aster, rose yarrow, Bladder Campion and spirea all were in her preferred palette. Furthermore, she explained to all who would listen, not a one of them required annual replacement, all were cold-hardy and free of disease. All made lovely bouquets or house gifts if she went visiting. When pushed a little, Brenda was occasionally forced to confess that she actually had little to do with the arrangement of the palette, hue or chroma. All were





Turk's Cap Lily (*Lilium superbum*)

native and natural so long as Bert did not get a bug in his bonnet and do a little more mowing or 'weeding' than necessary. Even were such an unfortunate event to come to pass, everything in evidence today would rise from the ashes next year at pretty much at the same time as in previous years like clockwork. For this they were both eternally grateful as Bert would be forgiven his trespasses (again).

Brenda's border gardens around the house were only slightly better organized. Here she tended a small variety of cutting flowers to fill out larger bouquets as necessary. Here snapdragons, zinnia, gaura and salvia varieties intermingled with coleus (for foliage), cosmos and coreopsis all to brighten

or fill out her much-sought-after arrangements. To nourish her vague sense of exotica, Brenda commandeered a little space in the veggie garden where she kept a modest annual planting of Turk's Cap lilies as she found them to be a tender perennial and s o m e w h a t unreliable in the event of a

cold winter. A good mulching with old straw, however, was all the insurance necessary for an annual repeat performance most years.

Bert, horticultural know-it-all that he was, was setting up for another successful season. He and Brenda had already put up several quarts of garden/English peas and a few pints of peapods. These they mostly ate fresh in salads or as sides at dinner time. Now it is snap bean season (green and wax beans) for the table, the freezer and/or pickling in pint mason jars. Their favorite bean, by far, were good old-fashioned Kentucky Wonders (which they supported on eight foot-tall teepees for easy picking) and

Dragon's Tongue more commonly called 'shell beans' by the local folk. As such, shell beans have an all-season appeal to the ardent gardener because when young they may be prepared as one would a snap bean. However, as the pods mature, these brightly colored beans may be shelled (hence the name) to be turned into succotash during late sweet corn season, served separately as one might lima beans, in a three-bean salad or dried for off-season preparations in soups or hearty stews. Brenda, however, preferred her shell beans to the traditional black beans and found that her beans could be used dry or fresh depending upon the season and adjusted her recipe accordingly.

As a boy, Bert had looked forward to

deer season when he and his dad would take a few days off for a 'guy's week of hunting and camping in the wilderness of the Northeast Kingdom. Over the years, Bert had learned a thing or two about growing up and the wonders of Mother Nature, especially about how to successfully hunt for White-tailed deer. He learned to recognize their trails, where they preferred to bed down at night and (more importantly) their browsing habits. All this knowledge made for a (usually!) successful but always enjoyable hunting season and the fount of many a sometimes-manufactured story about their successes and occasional failures when the boys returned home empty-handed. All this to say that in his later years, Bert figured he could get inside a deer's head and keep it

### BOSTON BLACK BEAN SOUP

2 cups dried black beans	1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1 tablespoon salt	1/8 teaspoon dry mustard
2 quarts water	1 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon butter	6 thin slices of lemon
2 tablespoons flour	6 cloves
1/2 tablespoon minced onion	1 hard-cooked egg, sliced

Soak beans overnight in water to cover. Drain. Add salt and water and cook 2 hours or until beans are very soft. Force mixture through sieve. Place purée back on stove and simmer 15 minutes. Melt butter, blend in flour. Add onion, pepper and mustard. Add cream slowly, stirring constantly until slightly thickened. Add to bean purée, blending well. Heat just to boiling point. Serve in shallow bowls. Place a slice of lemon with a clove and a slice of hard-cooked egg in each bowl. Serve with croutons. Serves 6.



out of his cherished gardens.

All this to say that as famously self-provident and horticulturally savvy Yankees, Bert and Brenda made good use of rotational planting. As such, they regularly made use of very large (and sometimes multiple) planters outside the protective garden fencing to reduce the chances of infection from soil-born diseases especially in their prized tomatoes. This, however, might have been an irresistible smorgasbord for the area deer population save Brenda's utter distaste for almost anything with fresh garlic in it. This turned out to be a convenient coincidence: both deer and Brenda were repulsed by the acrid smell of fresh garlic. So, every September Bert planted dozens of garlic cloves around the perimeter of their vegetable gardens which he carefully marked. Every summer, as soon as the scapes were starting to curl, he trimmed them and hung a few scapes in the branches of every tomato plant inside or outside the garden because, over the years, he had noticed that whenever there was a break-in, marauding deer never ate anything that was planted close to his garlic. In the vein of nothing wasted, using the scapes as deer-proofing saved them a few trips to the garden center for commercial product and guaranteed that there would never

be any garlic-scape pesto around the house.

In a similar vein, it turned out that the apocryphal legend about planting marigolds with the tomatoes was true particularly if you planted the taller varieties such as Moonshot or other pom-pom style varieties amongst the tomato plants. Like garlic, marigolds are particularly pungent and, therefore, remarkably unattractive to predatory deer in addition to any other beneficial effects that marigolds contribute as a pollinator and as a natural repellent to hornworms, cabbage worms, aphids and squash bugs. So, needless to say, not only were colorful marigolds snuggled amongst the tomatoes, but they were also salted liberally throughout Bert and Brenda's gardens.

Some of their new neighbors thought they were just cheap Yankees, other neighbors of a certain age (older or much younger) thought them keepers of horticultural knowledge. No matter their collected opinions, any and all the neighbors were thrilled to have a tour of Bert or Brenda's gardens and/or a seat at their table no matter the season or any time an invitation was extended. Such was the wonder of a simple life well-lived.

John Lee is the recently retired manager of MHS Gold Medal winner Allandale Farm, Cognoscenti contributor and president of MA Society for Promoting Agriculture. He sits on the Governor's Food Policy Council and UMASS Board of Public Overseers and is a long-time op-ed contributor to Edible Boston and other publications.

## From the Stacks

By Maureen T. O'Brien, Library Manager

*If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales.  
If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.*

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

### Featured Collection — Children's Books

Judy Blume said, "Let children read whatever they want and then talk about it with them." To have a meaningful conversation, you need to read the book, preferably with the child.

Our book mender, Diana Conroy spends many hours reading books with her granddaughter, Maeve. This month, Diana is our enthusiastic guest reviewer for children's books.

### Young Children's Book Reviews by Diana Conroy:

Have you ever peeked inside the library at MHS? It contains a wealth of information, a trip through the past, pertinent current information and mind-boggling artwork inside of books, vintage and new. In addition, there also is a treasure trove of children's books that just might provide a respite for the children and grandchildren in your life as we push through the dog days of August. Open every Thursday from 9-1, and by appointment otherwise, pop in for a visit some time!

To whet your appetite for some of the

children's selections, here is a review of four books from the children's bookshelves. The interest and or reading level range from 2-12.

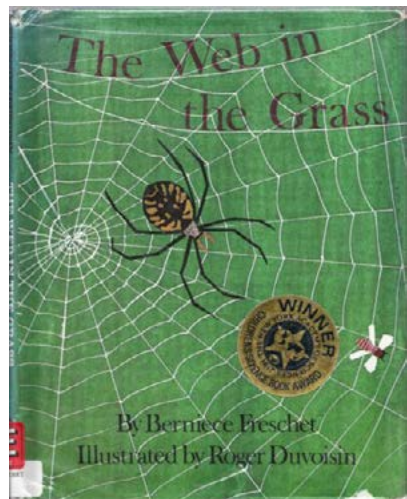
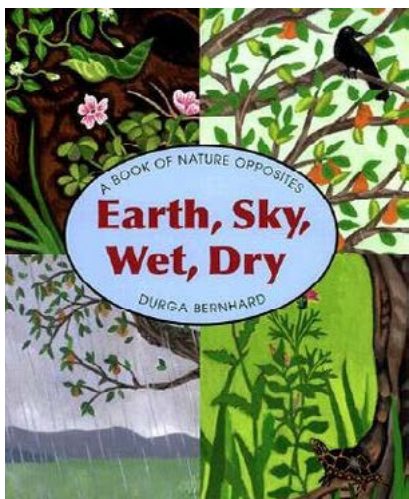
*Earth, Sky, Wet, Dry A Book of Nature Opposites* written and Illustrated by Durga Bernhard. Orchard Books, A Grolier Company, 2000.

Gorgeously illustrated, with a refreshing change of vocabulary from many "opposites" books, Bernhard introduces a wide variety of nature concepts. If this becomes a "read it 50 times in the three weeks that we have it" book, you will still find something to talk about. The author presents a treasure hunt that even a child well beyond interest in opposites books might enjoy a reading or two. At the end of the book are six pages of snippet illustrations and information.

*The Web in the Grass* by Berniece Freschet, illustrated by Roger Duvoisin. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.

This book was a surprise and delight to find. Given its age, it might have been long ago culled from a public or school





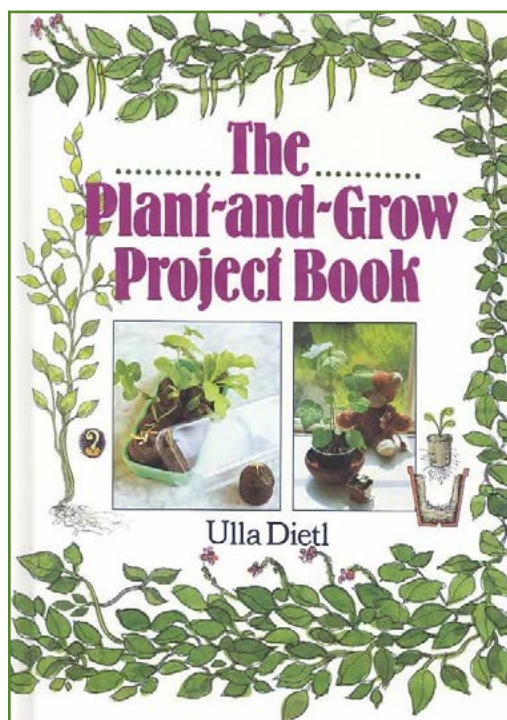
and she was mesmerized by it. We had to read it several times in the weekend that she stayed at our house and I enjoyed it each time.

*The Moonflower* by Peter and Jean Loewer. Peachtree Publishers Ltd., 1997.

Are you supervising children of a variety of ages? Do you enjoy realistic illustrations and pictures of stunning sunsets? How about finding a book packed with information that makes you want to learn a bit more? If yes, then this is the book for you! Learn about the mysteries of the Moonflower and the nighttime adventures of its nocturnal animal companions. Every other page includes a sidebar that gives supplemental information about these animals. This team of writers and illustrators has packed an amazing amount into 26 pages—from beautiful artwork to directions for growing your own moonflower plant, to a concise and comprehensive glossary. This book is sure to be interesting for a wide range of readers.

*The Plant-and-Grow Project Book* by Ulla Dietl. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1995. (Originally Published in Denmark 1992)

Part craft project, part science experiment and part botany lesson, this book is an interesting read. It is a great little “how-to” for any child—even those who don’t yet know that they are interested in plants. Originally published in Danish, you will find a few references that aren’t familiar, but you will also find some charming ways of phrasing things. This slim little volume is chock full of ideas to try! The author has considerably rated their level of difficulty and length of time. None are too challenging. For a younger plant scientist, there are plenty of projects that produce quick results. The combination of photographs and illustrations keep the activity ideas lively. Because a lot of these are for indoors and a number are edible, they can be started at any time, not just in spring. I want to try some of these projects!



## Book Club

The Book Club took the month of July off but is returning in August. The next Book Club meetings and books are:

**Tuesday, August 23**

*The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean

**Tuesday, September 20**

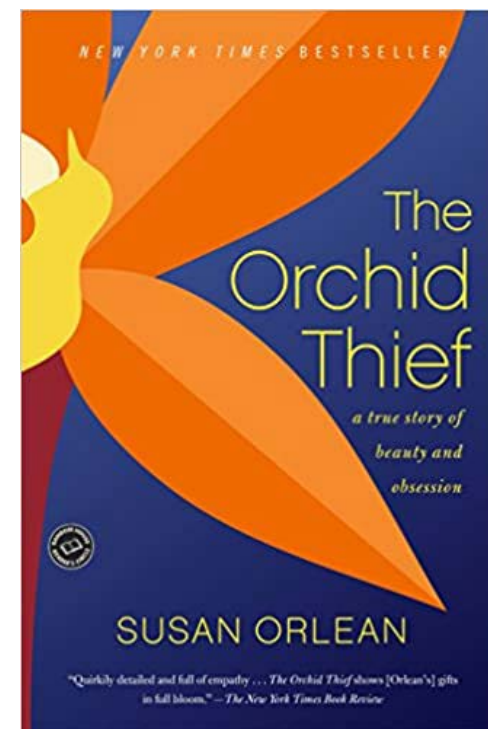
*Around The World In Eighty Plants* by Jonathan Drori. For those who have read this one, another option could be *Around The World In Eighty Trees* and again we might have an interesting discussion comparing the two books.

**Tuesday, October 25**

*Old Herbaceous* by Reginald Arkell

**Tuesday, November 15**

*The Gardener's Bedtime Book* by Richardson Wright



library. This story follows the travails and adventures of a little spider as she pursues her life’s work of spinning, procuring food and laying eggs. The writer skillfully builds suspense and changes the tempo of the spider’s experience to closely mimic a sense of clever survival in a challenging world. Nature is presented in a matter-of-fact way, pointing out the danger and the stunning beauty that surrounds us. The colorful collage style illustration strikes a beautiful balance between the simplicity that young children appreciate, and the complexity of nature. I selected this book to read to my three-year-old granddaughter,



**Tuesday, December 13**

*Hands On The Land*, by Jan Albers

All Massachusetts Horticultural Society members are welcome to join our book discussion group.

Meetings are in the Crockett Garden at 1:30pm. If the weather is poor, the meeting will be held indoors.

### **In the Windows – New Books**

#### **Our Collections are Growing**

We thank the following people and organizations for their generous contributions to the Library this month:

Frank and Christie Wyman donated autochrome glass plates previously owned by Christie's ancestors, Harris and Frances Kennedy. The Kennedys had an estate known as "The Pines" at Blue Hill Avenue and Brush Hill Road in Milton, MA. It is now the site of Fuller Village. While the main house remains, the gardens are gone. These plates depict the wonderful Japanese style garden on the property. The Kennedys were avid hybridizers of Iris Kampferi aka Iris ensata. They generously opened their estate for many charitable and diplomatic events.

The Autochrome Lumière was an early color photography process patented in 1903 by the Lumière brothers in France and was first marketed in 1907. It was the principal color photography process used before the

advent of subtractive color film in the mid-1930s.

We were pleased to receive the following new books from The Council

on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries:

- The Botanical City: A Busy Person's Guide to the Wondrous

Plants to Find, Eat and Grow in the City by Helena Dove, horticulturist at Kew Gardens. This is a lovely book to peruse on a sultry summer afternoon. She selected 100 plants from William Curtis' 18th century *Floral Londinensis*, which recorded every wild plant in London in the 18th century. Illustrated with faithful reproductions, it supplements the original text with new facts, contemporary medicinal uses and modern recipes.

- Nature's Palette, A Color Reference System from the Natural World by Patricia Baty. This book updates Werner's *Nomenclature of Colours* (1814,) a taxonomically organized guide to color in the natural world. This book arranged by color is a useful resource for artists, designers, scientists and explorers.
- Herbarium, The Quest to Preserve & Classify the World's Plants by Barbara M. Thiers, Director of the William and Linda Steere Herbarium at the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG.) NYBG has one of the three largest herbaria in the world. In this book, Thiers explores the history of herbaria and briefly looks at the future and problems we may face.
- Remarkable Trees by Christina Harrison & Tony Kirkham, from the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew. This book paints a portrait in words and illustrations of 60 trees from around the world.
- Growing Weed in the Garden, A





No-Fuss Seed-to-Stash Guide to Outdoor Cannabis Cultivation by Johanna Silver is a beautifully illustrated primer on growing “weed” aka Cannabis.

- The Multifarious Mr. Banks, From Botany Bay to the World, the Natural Historian Who Shaped the World by Toby Musgrave. Biography of Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) who was the botanist on James Cook’s first circumnavigation of the globe. For 41 years, Banks served as the president of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge. He also advised King George III on the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, laying the groundwork for today’s magnificent garden.
- Forests Adrift, Currents Shaping the Future of Northeastern Trees by Charles D. Canham. This book includes an historical analysis of how forests have changed since the arrival of European settlers, as well as theories on how ecosystems will change and adapt to the future.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society donated a reprint of *The Fruit-Gardener*, containing the method of raising Stocks ... by budding, grafting, etc. ... Laying out and managing Fruit Gardens, etc. To which is added the art of training fruit trees to a wall, etc., by J. Gibson, M.D. (1768). This

book is a nice complement to our collection of 18th and 19th century fruit growing books. Fruit growing was an important activity of our founders and a frequent subject of their meetings and exhibitions.

Support our mission by donating a book to the Library from the Society’s Amazon Smile Wishlist. Make sure you leave your name and we will thank you in the next Leaflet. Then come to the Library and borrow some books—one of your membership benefits! Borrowing books from a library is a great, green way to reduce your consumption.

#### Come Visit

The Library is open Thursdays from 10 am to 1 pm, by appointment and when the lights are on. Please email Library Manager Maureen O’Brien at [mobrien@masshort.org](mailto:mobrien@masshort.org) for an appointment if you want to schedule a visit.

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