Master Gardeners Sponsor Plant Sale and Exhibit at CT Science Center

A Garden Like No Other

If you haven’t visited the plaza and green roof gardens at the Cesar Pelli designed Connecticut Science Center (CSC), you really should. With a view of the Connecticut River, this huge living landscape of blooming xeriscape perennials miraculously survive on 50% less water in just six inches of special growing materials.

Saturday, May 22nd is a great opportunity for an introduction to Family Gardening Day at the Center in Downtown Hartford. The event is MakeFest: Make It Grow and it will be held from 11:00AM – 3:00PM. CMGA is partnering with the Connecticut Science Center for the event by helping to manage a plant sale and pollinator exhibit.

A Fun Day, Learning Included

In addition to the plant sale, you can attend, participate in or sponsor an exhibit! The Connecticut Science Center seeks local gardeners, farmers, makers, and artisans to serve as exhibitors. The event aims to highlight the importance of growing healthy, smart, green, and local through engaging on-site and virtual demonstrations, displays, or activities, all centered around Connecticut gardening and agriculture. (continue on page 7)
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President’s Message

Dear CMGA Members:

Happy Spring! The crocuses are up and daffodils are peeking through. I even saw the tops of my hyacinths yesterday. Many of us are fully vaccinated with more to follow. We’re not quite ready to gather in person. But, hey! The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter, and more and more, I’m convinced it’s daylight and not an oncoming freight train!

Our First Virtual Gardening Symposium was held on March 20th, and it was terrific! Yes, we had a few technical issues in the beginning, but worked through them. The speakers were first rate, and I learned so much. Assuming all goes well, we are going to plan on an in-person symposium for 2022. The location? We’re going to try really hard to have it back at Manchester Community College. So, keep your fingers crossed!

In my last letter, I mentioned that we were considering having an outdoor flower show. Well, a better opportunity came up. We will be joining the Connecticut Science Center at their fabulous campus for their MakeFest: Make It Grow. See the event on May 22nd at https://ctsciencecenter.org/makefest/ . We’ll take part in their outdoor plant sale to benefit both CMGA and the CT Science Center.

We’re having Nursery Day again! Mark your calendars for June 9th. You and your friends are invited to join us from 10am-3pm at McCue Gardens in Wethersfield. You will be hearing more through our various communication channels. I went for the first time last year. The pricing was advantageous and the plant choices were fabulous. You can be sure I’ve already started my plant list for this year!

The grant application process ended March 15th, with 18 applications received. The Grants Committee is hard at work evaluating the applications. If we initially can’t fund all 18, there may be a second round, so stay tuned!

We have a new Membership Development Committee. More members mean more funds to support Master Gardener Community outreach projects. So, if you have Master Gardener friends who are not members, please ask them to check out our website www.ctmga.org and join. If you have ideas on how to recruit more members, please contact me: dprior@ctmga.org.

And last, but not least, plans are underway for our Summer Safari and Semi-annual meeting in July or August. We have already secured a speaker! Watch your email, our website and our Facebook page as details emerge.

I’m so excited about the coming gardening season, our upcoming events and getting to see more of you in person! Again, I must give thanks to our dedicated and talented Board of Directors. They are making things happen for you, our incredible members.

Deb Prior
President CMGA
Once again, CMGA members were critical in supporting the Master Gardener Program in the UCONN Gives competition. With our help, the UCONN Extension Master Gardener Program raised $21,248 in donations and took second place in the leaderboard challenge with 613 donors. This means an additional $6,000, plus an additional $500 for the highest number of donors within the College of Agriculture. The grand total was $27,748! Funds raised and total donors are also substantially higher than last time.

**The Symposium VIRTUAL EVENT BAG Launches with Flying Colors!**

This year we added a new feature to the symposium, the Virtual Event Bag (VEB). This online marketplace stood in for the collection of vendors’ and societies’ display tables we usually have at an in-person event.

Although nothing can replace the one-on-one interaction of a real shopping experience, we’re thrilled that so many vendors, organizations and symposium attendees took a chance on this new format. In total, 26 vendors and societies placed an ad in the VEB, and 43% of attendees visited the VEB at least once. The full list of participating vendors and organizations can be found at our website ctmga.org. Special thanks to Natureworks in Northford, CT for being a Premium Sponsor of the CMGA symposium.

Thanks to your participation, we can deem this maiden voyage of the VEB a success! We will plan on including a Virtual Event Bag in future symposia, be they virtual or in-person events.

**Spring Grants Awarded**

Spring grants have been awarded.
Summer grant cycle will begin in mid June.
Check the CMGA website soon for more information!

**Ordering from Amazon??** Please remember to use the Amazon Smile website (smile.amazon.com), and select CT Master Gardener Association as your charity. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases directly to CMGA. Thank you for your support!
CMGA Nursery Day at McCue Gardens
June 9, 2021

WHERE: McCue Nursery, 47 Hartford Ave., Wethersfield, CT

WHEN: Wednesday, June 9, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Rain or shine!

Since 1967, McCue Gardens has been growing an impressive selection of perennials and wildflowers. They are now a leading wholesale distributor of quality perennials and wildflowers in New England.

This will be an opportunity for all Master Gardeners, MG Interns, plus their friends and family to buy perennials, natives and woodland plants grown at this family nursery operated by Bruce and Cindy McCue. CMGA will receive 20% of the purchase price of each plant purchased on that day.

Follow McCue Gardens on FaceBook: https://www.facebook.com/mccuegardens/
Safari and Semi-Annual Meeting Update

Although we cannot schedule a date or location for this annual event yet, due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, we’re waiting and watching for the day when large outdoor gatherings will be permitted. Keep checking our website ctmga.org for all the latest news and information.

In the meantime, we have secured an exciting new presentation for this event. We’re looking forward to Tovah Martin’s newest lecture, “Awakening Your Senses.” This live presentation will remind us that we benefit from more than just the visual aspects of our gardens. Our gardens can ignite all of our senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste as they come into play throughout the seasons. Tovah will help us rediscover the unexpected delights that are waiting for us in our garden spaces.

**Awakening Your Senses**
A Live Outdoor Lecture by Tovah Martin

A garden offers a world of wonders for your senses. And so often, we focus on duties and chores rather than reaping the rewards of what we have sown and planted. On all levels and in many layers, there is so much to discover when you begin to plug your senses into the garden. In this live lecture, everything from the pace of pathways to the secrets of gardening without sustaining injuries will be examined. In the process, we’ll broaden our senses as they come into play throughout the day and seasons. And as a result, we’ll discover how to create habitats that benefit all creatures great and small. Come and become more aware!
MakeFest continued from Page 1

Some topics to be explored at MakeFest: Make It Grow, on-site and virtually:

- Gardening
- Upcycled furniture or clothing
- Botanical artistry or making
- Farming
- Floral Arranging
- Green Technology
- Beekeeping
- Local sustainability

The Master Gardener Connection
Since 2017, Kim Kelly, Master Gardener since 1998, CMGA Lifetime Award member and MG Coordinator at UCONN in 2001, has been the CSC’s Horticulturist. Kim’s background in botany and environmental science, coupled with her passion for education, made her a natural fit to activate and transform the extensive green roof systems that cover over 50,000 square feet. Kim also created the Butterfly Encounter exhibit and oversees the team that cares for the 100 plus species of butterflies and more than 30 species of plants in this tropical habitat. Supporting Kim one day a week is the “Green Team,” so named because of their official dark green CSC Volunteer shirts. 2018 MG Graduates Kathy Beaty and Kim Radda were joined in 2019 by Susan De-muth, Nick Lorenzo and Kathye Cipes; followed by Kathy Cassidy, Tanika Thompson, Joanna White, Sandy Mirtl and Laura Victoria Barrera in 2020. Each week, this group helps to nurture and grow this diverse botanical collection. Kim’s multi-year garden plan will be in bloom and the Green Team would love to share it. There is parking in the building at 250 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT 06103. https://ctsciencecenter.org/visit/. Or, you can approach the gardens from the street level by walking up towards the Riverfront.

For the Plant Sale:
Sustainable and native plants will be donated by CSC, and CMGA will manage the sale and receive half of the profits. Plant donations (vegetables, herbs, natives preferred in 4” pots, each clearly labeled) can be dropped off at the Science Center loading dock on Thursday mornings in May, and each day of the week before the event. For information about donating or labeling your plants, email Kathye Cipes (KCipes@ctmga.org) or Kathy Beaty (KBeaty@ctmga.org). If you’re interested in participating in the Master Gardener tent, please contact Deb Prior (DPrior@ctmga.org).

To Exhibit:
Tables and space for Makefest: Make it Grow will be available within the galleries or on the plaza for on-site participants. Exhibitors are encouraged to include a family-friendly demonstration or activity. The CSC team can assist with brainstorming and virtual demos can be included. COVID-19 “Safety at Play” guidelines are on their site. If you’re interested in participating or showcasing your community organization, contact KRogers@ctsciencecenter.org. For sponsorship information about, contact Whitney Gray at wgray@CTScienceCenter.org or 860.520.2124.
By Kathye Cipes, Theresa Hennessey

We did it! We held our first Virtual CMGA Garden Symposium on Saturday, March 20th. Nearly 300 gardening enthusiasts joined us online for this all-day event. We started the day with a warm welcome from Dean Indrajeet Chaubey of the UCONN College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources. This was followed by our two featured speakers in the morning session. After a lunch break, attendees could choose two of our five breakout speakers in the afternoon.

Although we had the cooperation of three of our most experienced Master Gardener Coordinators, and conducted almost a dozen practice sessions over the previous two weeks, we experienced technical difficulties early on when nearly 300 participants were signing on to the virtual platform. Nonetheless, in about 40 minutes we were able to start what turned out to be a great event.

First, we were treated to nationally-known gardener, author and New York Times garden columnist Margaret Roach’s personal history with her garden in the Hudson Valley. In her presentation “Non-Stop Plants: A Garden for 365 Days” she told us the story of how her garden has transitioned to reflect her own changes in how she enjoys and appreciates nature. For example, she shared that she no longer mows to her property line but instead leaves a natural buffer to support natives, insects and wildlife. And, how she makes planting decisions based on views of the garden from inside her house. If you missed the Symposium, you can visit her website awaytogarden.com.

Next was Dan Benarcik’s presentation “Foliage First: Boom Without the Bloom.” He shared how his designs with color, shape and pattern in the garden aren’t limited to blooms and flowers. As a resident gardener at Chanticleer Gardens in Wayne, PA, Dan demonstrated how a strong foliar background of perennials, tropics and subtropics can carry the garden before and after blooms. Learn more at his website danbenarcik.com.

After lunch, Symposium attendees were given the opportunity to hear from five well known New England horticulturists.
Lorraine Ballato, who is an Advanced Master Gardener and also teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, shared her knowledge of "Hydrangeas for Cold Climate Gardens." Lorraine’s newest book, “Success with Hydrangeas,” is available on her website lorraineballato.com.

Irene Brady Barber, “Growing Vertically for Accessibility with Practicality in Mind” showed us some new ways of thinking about vertical gardening, and shared the new “living wall” planting techniques. Learn more about Irene’s work at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens at mainegardens.org.

Gregory Bugbee shared his scientific knowledge with us in his lecture “Improving Soil Fertility - A Soil Scientist’s Perspective.” His lecture was based on his experience as a soil scientist and the head of the soil testing program at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) in New Haven. See Greg’s extensive list of publications at portal.ct.gov/CAES/ABOUT-CAES/Staff-Biographies/Gregory-J-Bugbee.

Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, founder of Natureworks Horticultural Services in Northford, CT chronicled her experience with “Mulch vs. Groundcovers: A Garden Experiment,” her multi-year transition from cleaning beds, mulching and fertilizing to using hardy, native plants--albeit more of them--to self-compost, thrive and fill in space naturally. Follow Nancy’s blog at naturework.com.

Tovah Martin, an award-winning gardening author and lecturer, shared her expertise with "The New Terrarium," on how to work with glass enclosures of all types to create lovely terrariums to be enjoyed anytime, anywhere. See all of Tovah’s books and lecture dates at tovahmartin.com.

Although we missed the vitality and synergy of a live event, we’re thankful that so many of our loyal CMGA members and friends embraced this new virtual format. And thanks to multiple cost savings in travel, food and facilities expenses, we were able to raise over $10,000 in profits, making this our most financially successful symposium ever. Proceeds from this event will support CMGA grants for community outreach projects, scholarships for UConn Master Gardener interns and support for local MG county offices.

Special thanks to everyone who supported the event with ideas, attendance, donations and enthusiasm, especially the Symposium Committee (Chairman Theresa Hennessey, Kathy Beaty, Susan St. John, Carolyn Wilcox, Stuart Fisher, Caroline Moran); our UCONN Coordinators (Sarah Bailey, Gail Reynolds, Michelle Winkler); members of the Communications Committee who did dual duty (Christine Masztal, Kathye Cipes, Victoria Ambrosey, Ken Zacharias and Lisa Doggart); and our Speaker Chairman Marge Bingham who sought out and recruited our talented speakers.
Connect with Us
Take CMGA with you, any time, any place!

By Vicky Ambrosey and Lisa Doggart

CMGA can now easily fit into your busy schedules via our social media outlets: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and our website blog. You can view the latest news and information about CMGA happenings on all mobile and desktop devices.

**Facebook since 2010 - Follow CMGA & Like Our Page**

We celebrate 11 years with Facebook, since Earth Day, April 22, 2010. Our intent with Facebook is to share our CMGA activities and events, along with other state and local activities that might be of interest to our members and our UConn Master Gardeners. Like our page and look forward to timely updates and information about our state.

**Instagram since 2021 - Follow us at @ctmastergardener**

With Instagram, we enjoy sharing our stories and pictures of our outreach projects, activities and events. If a picture is worth a thousand words; gardening pictures are worth a million words! #ctmastergardener
YouTube since 2020  - See Our CMGA Channel

We have established a CMGA YouTube channel where you can view videos of our events, projects and activities plus other tours and interviews of interest to our members. There will be public videos as well as unlisted links - accessible through your email communications - to our membership & event attendees.

Website since 2005, updated 2019 - ctmga.org

Our recently renovated website is our official place to visit CMGA online. For the most complete information and access to Membership, Grants & Events, we have all the News, Member Happenings Blog, Forms & Details about what's happening and when. For our UConn Master Gardeners and Interns, it's a great place to read and learn what CMGA is all about!

Mailchimp since 2021

You are receiving this email because you opted in for communications when you became a member of the CMGA organization.

Mailchimp is our new tool for email communications to our membership. CMGA uses only official organizational emails to communicate with our members- @ctmga.org - Please consider adding these emails to your safe list so they will not be considered as spam. We don't want you to miss out on your CMGA News!
Hop Brook Landing

By Marilynn Palmer
CMGA Member

Hop Brook Landing at the Flower Bridge, a new town park located at the site of the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge in Simsbury, was completed in the late fall of 2019. I was propelled by the environmental movement to eliminate invasive plants and replace them with pollinator friendly native plants. While walking the site, I saw an opportunity to create what would actually be an ambitious plan. It included clearing of invasive plants along the meadow edge and the planting of native trees, shrubs, and perennials along the surrounding edges of the meadow to create a self-sustaining pollinator pathway link.

In March of 2020, I met with Jan Lintner, Chairperson of the Flower Bridge Basket Committee, and with staff from the Simsbury Town Parks and Recreation Department to discuss the plan. This project is in keeping with the mission statements of the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge Committee, the Simsbury Garden Club, the Connecticut Federated Garden Club Presidents Project, and the Uconn Master Garden Program. So, I invited each of these groups to participate!

By the end of May, autumn olive, Japanese barberry, bittersweet, poison ivy, and scrub brush were removed from the site. Volunteers from all of these organizations as well as volunteers from town spent better parts of Saturdays removing rocks, amending soil, and planting. During the growing season, five redbud trees, nine summersweet shrubs, 12 winterberry shrubs, 14 diervilla shrubs, 120 ferns, and 108 perennials were planted. All of the plants were generously donated.

Because of the severe drought during the summer, tireless volunteers watered the area almost daily for the entire growing season. The shrubs and trees survived and flowered. A grant from the Master Gardener Association provided plantings, edging, and soil amendments for a rock wall on the property.

Future plans for the 2021 season include planting of daffodil bulbs, additional perennials, and ground covers along the meadow edge.
The plan was ambitious. So were the volunteers! The new Hop Brook Landing at the flower Bridge Park is beautiful and the addition of the new garden plans has enhanced this site and created a haven for our pollinators.

I am grateful for the support and hard work from the many volunteers from the UConn Extension Master Gardener Program of Hartford County, the Simsbury Garden Club, the ODHFB Committee, and from many volunteers from the Simsbury Community who came together to help make our community an even better place!
Frogs and Toads
How They Benefit Your Garden

By Alicia Cornelio
Editor, Laurel

There are thousands of frog and toad species in the world. But like so many other animal species, they are suffering a decline in numbers. Environmental problems, climate change and human factors have contributed to the decline. The most common frogs and toads you are likely to see in Connecticut can be viewed at Wildlife of Connecticut.

Toads and frogs are both amphibians that are closely related. Unlike aquatic frogs, toads are adapted to live in drier land environments. You are more likely to see a toad in your garden. Toads have drier skin with bumps. Contrary to myth, these aren’t warts. They are called parotoid glands and they produce toxins that protect toads from predators. Some frogs also use poison as protection but there are no poisonous frogs in Connecticut.

Why Attract Frogs and Toads

Frogs and toads are an important part of the backyard ecosystem chain. It is a good idea to make space for them in your own garden. Their positive contribution far outweighs the little jump you see and “ribbit” you hear. They need our protection and shelter. If you provide the right conditions and garden features for these amphibious creatures, they should appear in your yard.

Frogs are good bioindicators. Frogs are often used by scientists to indicate if something is wrong in a surrounding area. Some are found with deformities that are thought to be associated with chemical pollution. You can use the indications from frogs to know if the conditions in your garden are safe and ecologically balanced.

Frogs and toads are amazing at cleaning the garden of harmful insects. A single frog or toad can eat over 100 insects, such as caterpillars, sow bugs and cutworms and more. With frogs around, you won’t need to use harmful pesticides.
How to Attract Frogs and Toads

Choose Native Plant Varieties

Frogs and toads are tasty snacks to predators like birds, foxes, or even cats. Give them plenty of safe areas to hide. Plant shrubs, understory ferns, native wildflowers, grasses, and other native, leafy plants. Native plants attract the insects they like to eat, too.

Eliminate Pesticides

Frogs and toads make very good substitutes for pesticides. If you must use chemicals on your garden, research the brands that are gentlest on the environment, and use them very sparingly on exactly the plants that need them.

Make a Friendly Water Environment or a Small Pond

Frogs and toads need a moist home. One of the best ways to encourage them is to install a pond in your yard. Keep water out of direct sunlight for eggs and tadpoles. Water features sometimes breed insects like mosquitoes, but frogs and toads should quickly eat those pesky bugs.

Create Shaded Sleeping Places

Make “toad abodes” to give the frogs and toads in your garden a few great hiding places where they can get out of the sun and sleep safely. You can make one by flipping a ceramic pot upside down and leaving a space on the bottom to allow a toad to scramble in and out of it.

Sources:


April is National Native Plant Month

By Carolyn Wilcox
CMGA Member

Native plants found in the US before European settlement evolved within particular regions. A growing number of gardeners are focusing on the co-evolutionary relationships that have developed between these plants and regional animals, including pollinators. Native plants’ usefulness in supporting biodiversity and alleviating climate change is leading to widespread enthusiasm for restoring native habitats. This selective list of resources should be helpful in finding beautiful and sustainable plants that will work well in a natural landscape.

General resources:

Audubon Native Plants Database - https://www.audubon.org/native-plants
Enter a zip code to bring up a list of native plants attractive to birds in your area. Audubon will send additional information on bird-friendly habitats to your email address.

Includes a “Gardening with Natives” section and links to electronic versions of the Native and Naturalized Vascular Plants of Connecticut Checklist (2014). Also featured is Connecticut’s Notable Trees Database.

Features an interactive map, checklist, and self-guided tour information for a collection of 2,400+ trees, shrubs, and vines.

Ecological Landscape Alliance - https://www.ecolandscaping.org/
Promotes ecological landscape practices through a wide array of educational offerings, including conferences, webinars, articles, and a newsletter. An Eco-Directory leads to extensive resources and a virtual marketplace.

Grow Native Massachusetts - https://www.grownativemass.org/
This website’s outstanding “Great Resources” section includes annotated “Best Books,” “Flora & Fauna Databases,” “Articles and Downloads,” “Our Experts Videos,” and much more.

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - https://www.wildflower.org/plants/ Search for 25,000+ plants by scientific or common name, consult a complete species list, explore native plants by state, or view images of what’s in bloom by month.
The Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College - https://www.sunywcc.edu/aboutnpc/

The Center features events including a landscape conference; plant lists and newsletters; and information on self-guided tours of several gardens. The college’s Go Native U offers classes and a certificate program on native plant gardening.

Native Plant Finder - https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/

With this National Wildlife Federation database, locate native plants by region according to the host butterfly and moth species that use them.

Native Plant Trust - http://www.nativeplanttrust.org/

Formerly the New England Wildflower Society, the Trust is known for its “Go Botany” database, which allows identification of 1,200+ “common native and naturalized New England plants.” Its many field trips and classes (many are online) range from garden design to environmental justice.

Plants Database (USDA) - https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/

This vast database offers detailed data, via U.S. regional maps, for native and introduced species. The many featured topics include “Culturally Significant,” “Introduced, Invasive, and Noxious Plants,” and “Threatened and Endangered.” An Images database holds 50,000+ drawings and photos.

Sources for plants:

American Beauties Native Plants - https://abnativeplants.com

Search by type (perennials, trees, etc.), bloom time, sun exposure, critter resistance, soil type, and other criteria to find plants of interest; then find a local garden center. Participates in the Pollinator Partnership.

Connecticut Conservation Districts - https://www.conservect.org

Consult the individual conservation district links for information on plant sales that focus on native plants and plugs--from trees and shrubs to grasses and edibles.

Grow Native Massachusetts: Nurseries and Seed Sources - https://grownativemass.org/Great-Resources/nurseries-seed

A comprehensive list of retail sources, seeds and plugs, wholesale nurseries, and annual plant sales of note. Included are exclusively native nurseries in CT and nearby states.

Native Plant Trust: Garden in the Woods and Nasami Farm - http://www.nativeplanttrust.org/for-your-garden/buy-native-plants
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