

The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a branch with several clusters of small, bright yellow flowers. The flowers are arranged in dense, hanging racemes. The leaves are green and have serrated edges. The lighting is bright, creating a soft glow around the flowers.

*the* HPSO  
*quarterly*  
SPRING 2026

A PUBLICATION  
OF THE HARDY  
PLANT SOCIETY  
OF OREGON

# SPRING 2026

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front cover photo: *Berberis jamesiana* in Linda Wisner's garden. Photo by Linda Wisner.

this page: The lush fern-filled Hardy Fern Foundation stumpery inside the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, page 8. Photo by Emily Joseph.

# Hortlandia

This premier gardening event presents small specialist nurseries and garden-themed artists from across the Pacific Northwest.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026

Supporters Night  
5:00-8:00 pm  
Friday tickets are \$25.

## Westside Commons Wingspan Event Center

801 NE 34th Avenue  
Hillsboro, Oregon

## SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2026

10:00 am-4:00 pm  
Tickets are \$5.

Children 12 and under are free.

Hortlandia is one of the premier gardening events in the Pacific Northwest, bringing together small specialty nurseries and garden-themed artists from across the region. On Friday night, enjoy first access to Hortlandia in a quieter shopping environment, with more time to talk directly with our nursery vendors.

Most importantly, your ticket helps support HPSO's educational programs, events, and community outreach.

Food will be available for purchase, including vegetarian and gluten-free options. This sale is a wonderful opportunity to discover unusual plants, handmade art, garden books, quality gardening tools, and a special botanical display.

We will also hold plant plants while you shop—check in your purchases, continue shopping, and pick them up at your car when you're ready to leave. No charge.

## REGIONAL NURSERIES

A Plethora of Primula | Alpine Gardens | Arbutus Garden Arts | Bearly Farms | Black Dog Garden & Nursery | Broken Gate Farm | Brothers Herbs & Peonies | Celestial Dream Gardens LLC | Cistus Design Nursery | Dancing Oaks Nursery and Gardens | Eden's Park | Eric's Edibles | Green Seed Gardens | Hughes Water Gardens | Hydrangeas Plus | Illahe Rare Plants | Jeff Greene's Carnivorous Plants | Kilchis Farms | Killdeer Farms

| Kiona Native Plants | The Lily Garden | Lux Perennials Nursery | Miller's Manor Gardens | N&M Herb Nursery | Native Plantscapes Northwest | One Earth Botanical | One Green World | Out In The Garden Nursery | Paradise Farm | Pearson Nursery LLC | Petal Heads | Plant Bae | Propagation Station | Rancho Cacto Nursery + Design | Rhythm Seed Farm | Rita Lee's Cactus Nursery | River Rock Nursery | Sebright Gardens | Secret Garden Growers, LLC | Shady Companions | Sunny Way Plants | Sweet Sprouts PDX | Van Hevelingen Herb Nursery | Windcliff Plants

## GARDEN-THEMED ART & GARDEN TOOLS

Beggar's Tomb Silver | Bridgetown Garden Tools | byrkitwear | Cassiopeia Garden Care | Copper Garden | Forged and Fused | Garden Like a Girl | Gough Arts | Gretchen's Artistry | Hidden Willow Grove | Hiss Buzz Hum | Image Custom Ironwork | January 5th Designs | Karen Finding Joy | Leafy Lexicon | Nuevas Sonrisas Garden Aprons | Red Pig Garden Tools | Southbound Ceramics | Steelhead Metalworks | Wild Wisdom Wool Pellet Co.

## NON-PROFIT HORTICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

American Bamboo Society Pacific NW Chapter | Columbia-Willamette Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society | Full Circle - Portland | Greater Portland Iris Society | Oregon Association of Nurseries | OSU Extension Service - Garden Future | Pacific Northwest Begonia Society | Rogerson Clematis Garden | Xerces Society

Visit [hortlandia.com](http://hortlandia.com) for the latest updates, links to our vendors, and to purchase advance tickets (tickets will also be available at the door).

Parking is \$10 (free after 7:00 pm on Friday and after 3:00 pm on Saturday). Consider carpooling or taking public transit via the MAX Blue Line or Red Line, or (on Saturday) TriMet Bus 48. All public transportation options can be accessed from the Sunset Transit Center.

No wagons or pets, please. Strollers with humans are welcome.

Assistance is available for shoppers with disabilities—please call the HPSO office at 503-224-5718 in advance.





## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to spring!

In this issue of the *Quarterly* we launch two new features. First, a Seasonal Checklist of garden activities for the season, written by a knowledgeable plantswoman. Second, what we anticipate will be a new series introducing our readership to other regional plant organizations with specialized horticulture interests, beginning with an article about the Hardy Fern Foundation of Federal Way, Washington.

If you would like to have your non-profit featured in a future issue of the *Quarterly*, email [Quarterly@hardyplantsociety.org](mailto:Quarterly@hardyplantsociety.org), for more information.

Other topics in this issue range from growing your first tomato to successfully aging in place in your long-time garden. And you will learn about plants that flourish in shade, plants that survived a major storm, garden designing for all-season interest, and all about ladybugs.

In these pages, you can also read more about HPSO's new president, Karen Palmer. And be sure to check out our nursery profile highlighting N&M Herb Nursery of Hubbard, Oregon, our reviews of the latest coffee-table garden books, and a story about new garden research on honey bees vs. native pollinators.

Enjoy.

Eloise Morgan

## HPSO NEWS

### OUR WEBSITE HAS A NEW LOOK AND A NEW STRUCTURE



Volume 14, Number 2

*the* **HPSO**  
*quarterly*

A publication  
of the Hardy  
Plant Society of Oregon

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[hardyplantsociety.org](http://hardyplantsociety.org)

After much research and many hours, HPSO launched a new website in February. This site is a testament to the power of HPSO volunteers. Board Member and visual storyteller Kim Campbell, with extensive input from members of the Executive Committee and Executive Director Amy Coulter, has gone above and beyond to create a website that feels visually fresh and deeply representative of the people of HPSO. In that vein, the site uses no stock photography and no AI images. Just great photos from our committed membership.

We invite you to explore the site and let us know if you notice any errors or oddities as we continue this transition. Some sections are still growing, and we'll be expanding features over time—including plans in coming months for more interactivity in the Open Garden section.

# A PROFILE OF PRESIDENT KAREN PALMER

photo by John Emmett



## Steering the Ship

by Sara L. Sumpter

Last November, at the HPSO Annual Meeting, Karen Palmer was elected as the new president of the organization, succeeding past president Zoe Nielsen, who has returned to her native Australia.

Originally from Maryland, Karen grew up on a dairy farm helping to tend the family vegetable garden. She has both a lifetime of gardening experience and a long history of involvement with gardening organizations in the Pacific Northwest. She has been a member of Master Gardeners in Clark County, Washington, where she lives, for more than 25 years. It was her participation in that group that initially led her to join HPSO two decades ago.

"I vividly remember one of my fellow Master Gardeners one day said, 'Oh, you know, there's this local group, and we're having a meeting next week, and it's in a really cool garden. You should come!'" Karen told me. "I went to that meeting as her guest—it was the Clark County interest group of the HPSO."

Visiting a grand HPSO garden was somewhat daunting for her, as it is for many home gardeners. But Karen's husband helped her through her feelings of inadequacy, reminding her of her own quite lovely garden. As her visits and meetings with the Clark County interest group continued, it was time to become active with "the mothership," as Karen calls the Portland-based nonprofit. There she discovered more beautiful gardens and was inspired to find more ways to contribute to the organization.

"I actually screwed up the courage to have an Open Garden after many years, and that first effort was nerve-wracking," she said. "But I found everyone so friendly, and

everybody found something in my yard that they just loved. It makes you feel good."

Prior to retirement in 1995, Karen was a software engineer in the Bay Area of California, where she and her husband maintained a small garden, growing tomatoes, raspberries, and other zone-appropriate plants as a means of relaxation. "I used to work at least 60 hours a week," she noted, "so gardening was my release valve."

Working in the tech industry has given Karen a particular approach to both gardening and organizational volunteering.

"I learned from engineering that you break things down into smaller components," she told me. "When my husband and I moved here for retirement, we started out with an empty lot. There were only blackberries, thistles, and daisies, so I applied my engineering tactics to compartmentalize the work. We worked from the house outward, and each year we would tackle a different area of the yard."

It is an approach that suits both annual garden maintenance tasks and the work of volunteering for the HPSO. Karen first began volunteering with yearly participation at the Hortlandia plant sales. In 2022 she was elected to the HPSO Board. Eventually she assumed the role of Treasurer and helped HPSO to update its tax status and relaunch the travel program. Last year she was asked to accept a nomination to serve as president, which, with a little arm twisting, she agreed to do.

As for her plans going forward, Karen emphasized the importance of building on recent successes to keep the organization on track. "I figure, at least in the immediate

future, if I can keep steering the ship in the right direction, I'll be happy."

However, she is also looking at some new initiatives. One program that Karen is committed to expanding is garden workshop offerings. "Last year, we started this program with a few workshops that kind of fell in our laps," she said. "This year, I've formalized a committee to plan and develop the workshops. They're already off to a running start with lots of ideas."

This sharing of ideas and dedication to developing new projects for the community is one of the things that makes HPSO such a worthwhile organization for Karen.

"The reason I agreed to do all of this is because I think it's a wonderful group," she told me. "When something's really working and provides a lot of joy in your life, it's good to put your effort into it and help it along in any small way possible." She adds, "We have a lot of great volunteers. Some can only volunteer for one shift at Hortlandia, and some are able to give a lot more of their time, but it all helps to make the organization thrive. Many hands make light work!"

[Editor's Note: An expert on growing vegetables, Karen outlines steps for successfully growing tomatoes, on page 12.]

■■■  
*Sara L. Sumpter is a professional editor and translator living in Northeast Portland. A determined, though still relatively junior, gardener, she is interested in expanding her knowledge of gardening to include methods of seed saving, food preservation, and foraging. She is a regular contributor to the Quarterly.*



# DO YOU SELL LADYBUGS?

text and photography by Amy Campion



The Pacific three-banded ladybug is a native species you may find in your garden.

“Do you sell ladybugs?” is the most common question we receive at Garden Fever Nursery in Portland, Oregon, in the spring, when aphids descend upon our customers’ gardens.

We do not sell ladybugs, and here’s why, as paraphrased from a statement from the Xerces Society (Jepsen and Black, 2014):

- Convergent ladybugs (*Hippodamia convergens*) from California are the ones most often sold in this area. While this species is native to Oregon and Washington, importing the insects from elsewhere can introduce new pathogens to our local populations.
- Californian ladybugs may breed with our local populations and introduce genes that are unhelpful here.
- Imported ladybugs compete with our local insects—including other ladybugs—for resources.
- Convergent ladybugs are collected in such great quantities in the Sierra Nevada of California that farm crops nearby may suffer from the depletion of this natural pest control.
- Store-bought ladybugs are ineffective pest control anyway. They can simply fly away, and that’s what they do.

All of this was news to me a few years ago. Since then, I’ve been reading up on ladybugs and studying them in my garden, and I’ve learned some even more surprising ladybug facts. (I know lady beetle is the proper term, but I use the more popular nickname.)

## Our most common ladybugs are not native, and that’s a problem.

According to Merrill Peterson’s fantastic field guide, *Pacific Northwest Insects*, there are almost 150 species of ladybug in our region. According to iNaturalist records, there are perhaps 30 species here in Portland. I’ve observed 14 species in my garden, and the two most common species are exotic (non-native). The seven-spotted ladybug (*Coccinella septempunctata*) is European. It does eat aphids, but it also competes with native ladybugs and other insects for food. The Asian ladybug (*Harmonia axyridis*) is worse. It not only competes for resources, but will even eat other ladybugs’ eggs. This is also the species most likely to take shelter en masse in your home in winter. Asian ladybugs emit a stinky fluid when threatened and will bite if handled.

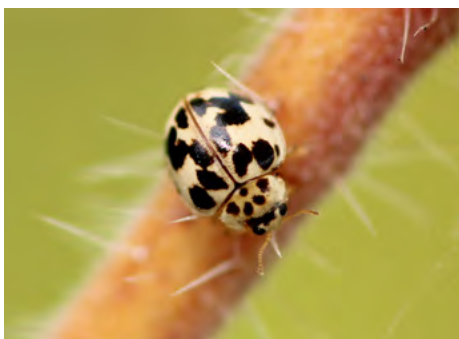
Some native ladybugs have become quite rare in recent years, and competition from exotic species is likely a factor.

## Not all ladybugs eat aphids... some eat powdery mildew.

In the summer, I regularly find two ladybug species in my garden, the twenty-spotted ladybug (*Psyllobora vigintimaculata*) and the western fairy ladybug (*Psyllobora borealis*), chowing down on powdery mildew on my plants. They’re easy to overlook, being much smaller than our more familiar ladybugs, and they aren’t red and black, but cream with brown and black markings. Ladybugs in general are more varied in size, color, pattern, and behavior than you probably realize.

## Baby ladybugs look like tiny alligators.

Ladybug larvae—which, by the way, have even more voracious appetites than their parents—are usually overlooked by gardeners, because they look nothing like the adults. They often resemble miniature alligators. The most common ones in my garden are black, and some have orange or gray markings.



The western fairy ladybug eats powdery mildew instead of aphids.



The native twice-stabbed ladybug reverses the usual color pattern.



This seven-spotted ladybug was parasitized by a zombie ladybug wasp.



Asian ladybugs eat aphids, but they're considered pests.



Convergent ladybugs are sold in garden stores. Don't buy them!



The western polished ladybug is one of our most common natives.

The powdery-mildew-eaters are cream, which helps them blend in with their surroundings. One species native to Australia but introduced around the world, the mealybug destroyer (*Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*), is covered in woolly, white protuberances in its youth, making it resemble its mealybug prey.

### Ladybugs may lay trophic eggs.

Mother ladybugs may lay extra, infertile eggs, known as "trophic eggs," to give their offspring a quick meal upon hatching. Look for ladybug eggs near aphid outbreaks on your plants. They're typically bright yellow, football-shaped, and laid in clusters of 10 to 30, sometimes more.

### There's a wasp that turns ladybugs into zombie babysitters.

I'd heard about zombie ladybugs, but I didn't think much about them, until I found one in my garden last summer. The lady beetle parasitoid wasp (*Dinocampus coccinellae*) injects an egg into an adult ladybug. The larva develops inside the living ladybug, eating its non-essential

organs. When the wasp exits the ladybug to pupate, the virus that the wasp mother also injected into the host kicks in, partially paralyzing the ladybug and forcing it to unwittingly guard the cocoon of the pupating wasp. The process usually kills the ladybug, but not always.

### This is all very interesting, you may say, but what do I do about aphid infestations in my garden?

I would suggest you do nothing.

If you don't spray pesticides in your garden, you probably already have an army of insects ready to feast on aphids. Ladybugs are the most familiar predators, but you'll also find soldier beetles, hoverflies, lacewings, robber flies, damselflies, long-legged flies, aphid wasps, damsel bugs, and assassin bugs keeping the population in check. So far,

I've observed 40 insect species in my garden that prey on aphids, and I'm sure there are many more. Be patient. Trust in them. They'll almost always take care of the problem, and it won't cost you a dime.

■ ■ ■  
*Freelance writer, editor, photographer, speaker, and former HPSO board member, Amy Campion co-authored the acclaimed Gardening in the Pacific Northwest and is working on her second book. A Portland resident since 2013, she blogs about gardening at [amycampion.com](http://amycampion.com). Amy currently works at Garden Fever nursery in Northeast Portland and is a regular columnist for the Quarterly. She is available to speak about increasing garden biodiversity with native plants.*



Ladybug eggs are yellow and shaped like footballs.



Baby ladybugs look like tiny alligators.

# My Tapestry of Plants

text and photography by Jeff Fairchild



*Epimedium wushanense* 'Spiny Leaved Form'.

Forty years ago, I started creating my tapestry of plants on a blank slate in Northwest Portland. Tackling steep slopes in the front and backyards and a northeastern exposure, I have experimented with many plants...not all with success. I realized early on that

shade wasn't a problem but rather an opportunity to focus on plants that create complementary textures, with enough colored foliage and year-round flowers, to give me the garden I desired.

My plant selections fall into three basic groups: background plants, textural stunners, and plants with dynamic flowers or scent, with some plants fitting into multiple categories. As I have grown to understand my garden, recognizing each plant's role has been helpful in making plant shopping more manageable.

My background plants, in general, are more utilitarian than favorites. Western red cedar, mountain hemlock, sword ferns, and several sweet-smelling sarcococca fill my borders and give me privacy. Five maples, three green (coral bark, Shishigashira, one unnamed) and two red (both too old to remember the species), give me interesting vertical branching patterns while still allowing enough light for my understory plants. Carefully

selected rhododendrons give my garden year-round color and act as great foundations. Since I don't get a lot of sun, my selections revolve around leaf texture and color. I love rhodies with lots of indumentum (colorful fuzzy coating on undersides of leaves). Some of my favorites are *Rhododendron* 'Teddy Bear', *R. pachyanthum*, the minute *R. radicans* (syn. *Rhododendron calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum* Radicans Group), and for large size, *Rhododendron protistum* var. *giganteum*.

My fern collection makes up a sizable portion of what I would describe as my textural plants. I have three medium-to-large Tasmanian tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*) that are strategically placed for a "wow" factor. Adding to my tree fern collection are over 30 other fern varieties including our native Western maidenhair, Himalayan maidenhair, a large clump of Chilean hard fern (*Blechnum chilense*), a number of painted fern species (*Athyrium*), several royal ferns (*Osmunda regalis*), jeweled chain fern (*Woodwardia unigemmata*)...the list goes on and on. Over the years, I have realized ferns work well for me. With variation in size, types of fronds, and colors ranging from chartreuse to burgundy, they add a very pleasing foundation to my garden.

With limited sun and a cooler environment, I can highlight other plant groups where variations in their leaf size and texture



*Dicksonia antarctica* (Tasmanian tree fern).



A backyard tapestry of colors and textures.



*Podophyllum peltatum*.

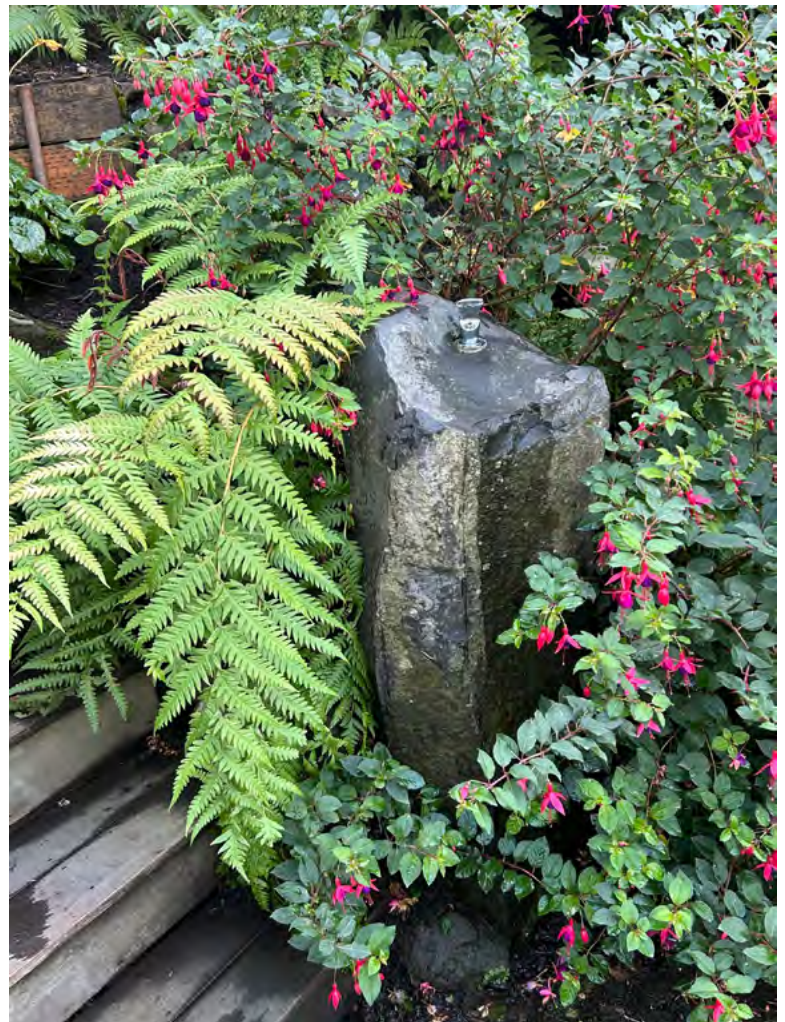
are the draw. Chinese mayapples (*Podophyllum*) are a favorite category. My collection includes 'Kaleidoscope' and 'Spotty Dotty' for their mottling color; *P. delavayi* with its show-stopping purple hue, jagged leaves, and purple flowers; and the common *P. peltatum* that provides large clumps of stunning foliage. Barrenwort (*Epimedium*) are another go-to. (My mother called *Epimedium* the royalty for shade!) Again, I am selecting more for leaf characteristics than for flowers: *E. wushanense*, with its large sawtooth leaf is exceptional, 'Domino' is great for its height, 'Spine Tingler' is a smaller option. Three varieties of ginger, *Asarum splendens*, *caudatum*, and *canadense*, along with *Beesia* fill in the empty spaces creating a carpet of green.

Giving the garden pops of color, my large *Mahonia x media* 'Arthur Menzies' and *Daphne bholua* are outstanding in early winter. Trillium, including *kurabayashii*, *recurvatum*, and *ovatum* (our Western trillium), along with over 40 different hellebores, give my garden excitement from February into early spring. Rhododendrons and azaleas are highlighted in late spring. Fuchsias ('Aurea' for leaf color, 'Double Otto', and many others), together with seasonal begonias and stunning hydrangeas brighten my garden into late fall.

While living in a shady location doesn't afford me the explosion of color a sun garden offers, the soothing tapestry of interwoven greens in endless textures is a wonderful retreat year-round.



*Jeff Fairchild's inspiration has been his mother's passion for conifers and his brother, Scotty Fairchild, who was the head gardener at Portland's Leach Botanical Garden for over 10 years. Jeff has honed his design skill through four decades in the retail produce industry.*



Drinking fountain surrounded by *Woodwardia unigemmata* (jeweled chain fern) and *Fuchsia magellanica* 'Riccortonii'.

## ANOTHER PLANT SOCIETY



## Hardy Fern Foundation

For Lovers  
of Fronds  
and Foliage

by Devon Burns

The founding members of the Hardy Fern Foundation (HFF) had an unbounded excitement for ferns, and with HFF's formation in 1989, they tapped into a long history of fascination not seen since the Victorian fern craze. The organization's mission was to establish a comprehensive collection of the world's hardy ferns for display, evaluation, preservation, education, and introduction to gardening and horticultural communities. Since its inception, HFF has generated connections with fern enthusiasts, shade-loving gardeners, and experts from the Pacific Northwest and throughout the world.

The Hardy Fern Foundation Stumpery, the world's largest public stumpery, is located at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington. It was installed in 2009 and is still maintained by HFF.

In addition to our public display gardens, today we offer a variety of events, including webinar lectures, tours of regional public and private gardens (such as last year's multi-day Portland, Oregon, garden tour), hands-on classes and workshops, fern propagation courses, and more. We also partner with public gardens across the nation through our affiliate garden program, which encourages gardens to cultivate, test, and share data about ferns.

Our fern propagation program is a partnership with both the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden of Seattle and



HFF members attend a workshop on building fern tables at Lakewold Gardens, Lakewood, Washington.

the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, with the goal of introducing new ferns into cultivation and making rare ferns more commercially available. Recently, we increased the quantity and variety of ferns available through our annual spring and fall Fern Fest sales at Bellevue (Washington) Botanical Garden, our online catalog storefront, pop-up sales, and the on-site nursery of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. We partner with the American Fern Society's spore exchange program and have a new internship program for the next generation of horticulturists.

Membership in the Hardy Fern Foundation isn't exclusive to fern-fanatics. Those who are curious about ferns, shade-loving plants, and everything in between are encouraged to join. All members receive free entry into the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, paper copies of the *Hardy Fern Foundation Quarterly*, special

discounts to all our events, and a free annual, five-part, virtual lecture series in partnership with the British Pteridological Society and the Dutch Fern Society. To learn more about becoming a member, visit our website at [hardyferns.org](http://hardyferns.org).

While the Victorian fern craze peaked more than a century ago, the passion, curiosity, excitement, and desire for ferns that rose to a fever pitch during that era is very much alive today. And to that we say—Happy Ferning.



*Devon Burns is the program manager of the Hardy Fern Foundation and is the maintenance specialist at Project Landworks landscape architect firm. She holds a degree in sustainable landscape management from Edmonds College and a Pollinator Steward certification from Pollinator Partnership. She can be found in Bellingham, Washington, where she is busy creating her new, shade-filled habitat garden.*



The striking new growth of *Woodwardia unigemmata*, also known as jeweled chain fern, is gracefully displayed in the stumpery at the RSBG.

See a full-page version of this photo on the inside front cover:



The lush fern-filled Hardy Fern Foundation stumpery inside the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden.

# welcome! TO THESE NEW MEMBERS

December 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026

We're pleased that you have recently joined our ranks, which currently number just under 3,190 active members. We hope HPSO offers you the same gardening inspiration, guidance, and camaraderie that has sustained so many of our long-time members, and we look forward to meeting you at events like our annual meeting, Hortlandia, PlantFest, After Hours, and open gardens.

Brandon Alleman  
Karen E Anderson  
Linda Baker  
Alex Bellegarde  
Sven Bergmann  
Randy Bonella  
Jonah Bowron  
Connie Bozarth  
JaCee Burnes  
Amanda Calderon  
Cherie Christensen  
Kelly Cowan  
Klark Dahlman  
Tami Danisch  
Hannah Day-Kapell  
Patricia DiPrima-LeConche  
Theo Dreher

Linda Dunbaugh  
Endre Elteto  
Alison Firemark  
Courtney Fournier  
Susan Frisby  
Nancy Fulgham  
Nancy Garner  
Mary Lyn Gough  
Karen Griffin  
Christina Gullion  
Donna Hacker  
Patricia Harding  
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Bece Kidder  
Maya Klein  
Terri Krevanko  
Anne Krush  
Rachael Kuryunny  
Shiloah Laird  
Kelsea LaVoie  
Julie Le Grove  
Robin LeConche  
Rosalind Lee

Rachel Lehman  
Robert Leimer  
Tracy Leimer  
Connie Lewis  
Mary Lindstrand  
Kate Losman  
Emily Love  
Jori Love  
Lee McCollins  
Darla McGary  
Kiley Melicker  
Lisa Miles  
Yvette Mills  
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Tina Mori  
Gretchen Nation  
Claire Nettleton  
Gwyneth Olsen  
David Olson  
Christine OMara  
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Tracy Pinder  
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Deborah Poppert  
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Danielle Quast  
Monika Radke  
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Gayathri Ramprasad  
JoAnn Read  
Terry Read  
Kendra Renard  
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Matt Schwab  
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Lindy Sproul  
Catherine Stemper  
Lana Stern  
Cameron Svenson  
Rachael Torchia  
Kelly Ure  
Kathy Verble  
Carol Wallace  
Tracy Wan  
Suzanne Wehrey  
Dixie Whetsell  
Nancy Whiteaker  
Jodi Williams  
Anne Zubko



A newly offered fern, *Anisocampium cuspidatum*, is being tested for hardiness across the country.

## OUT IN THE GARDEN

# HOW SHALL WE GARDEN AS WE AGE?

by Barbara Blossom Ashmun

Nearly 40 years ago, craving a larger garden, I moved to two-thirds of an acre in the West Slope area of Southwest Portland, Oregon. The flat, sunny property was covered with a scattering of fruit trees, field grass, horsetail rush, and a tangled mass of grape vines.

As I approached the age of 80, I gazed in wonder at the lush island beds and borders with color for every season. Did I really create all this? But now I faced a bigger question: how could I sustain this labor of love into older age?

I dreaded summer's heat. A portrait of me by Vermeer would have been titled "Woman with a Hose," as I hauled hoses, hand watering the beds and dozens of pots. "You should get an automatic irrigation system," my husband Tom had been urging, for years. "But I move plants around so often, I know I'll cut into the hoses," I protested. "Plus it will tear up the garden, all that digging, and the cost, no, I can't!"

As the years flew by, I had to admit he was right—hand watering was exhausting. Reality dawned, and I moved forward. Yes, the garden was a mess the winter of the installation, and yes, the cost took my breath away. But during my following "Summer of Liberation," gardening became a pleasure again.

A few years later, due to macular degeneration and thyroid eye disease, my vision declined. I lost depth perception and had to be vigilant while walking. A cane or walking stick helped me probe ahead for dips, slopes, and curbs, and warned me about trip hazards like surface roots. Navigating uneven paths in the garden slowed me down as I guarded against slipping, staggering, or falling.



One of several windows that frames a gorgeous view of Lisa's garden, allowing her to enjoy its beauty, especially when she's not able to get outdoors.

photo by Barbara Blossom Ashmun



The author had a stone porch built with railings for safety, ample level landings, and manageable stairs. In the foreground, new solid gravel paths provide a firm surface for walking. These improvements replaced a hazardous wooden deck and uneven paths covered with cedar chips.

It was time to make another improvement: building solid, safe walkways—another messy job. In winter's rain a crew excavated the paths, laid down tons of gravel, and tamped it down into a sound, firm surface. Now I walk confidently at a more reasonable pace. More recently a hazardous wooden porch, sloped and slippery, was replaced with a safer stone entry and a small patio for visitors.

I began wondering how my avid gardening friends, also committed to aging in place, were changing things for the better. In a series of conversations, I asked what motivated them to change and what new tricks helped them carry on.

## Golden Gardener: Lisa Fuller

Lisa Fuller has been gardening for nearly 20 years in the Garden Home neighborhood of Southwest Portland. Her half acre is mostly woodland and slopes down to a seasonal creek. We became friends at "Gardening in Our Golden Years," an HPSO interest group that she co-founded some years ago when we were all younger and stronger.

Recently Lisa suffered two serious falls that catalyzed change. "I'm breakable, now how can I manage my life?" she asked herself. Gradually she increased her garden helper's visits from once in

photo by Lisa Fuller



A favorite relaxing spot in Lisa's garden.

six-to-eight weeks, to monthly, and lately, every other week.

Some of Lisa's beautiful containers are placed along the sloping back garden, where she enjoys walking when the weather and health allow. "If I can't walk down to the bog any more (at the lower garden), I'll move the pots closer."

Large windows give her pleasure when she can't get out. "I want to be able to see the whole garden from my living room and bedroom windows, wherever I'm parked." She's planning stops along the way, "relaxation places," where she can sit and recover her energy. Above all, Lisa is making her garden safer.

"We're not nimble any more. Take your time and be mindful how you move," she advises. To improve walking on her slope she plans to have railings and hand holds installed, to have stumps and exposed roots dealt with. Resetting stepping stones and leveling the patio are tasks to tackle soon.

Beyond the work ahead, there's joy right now from new solar spotlights. "At night I have a view of the branches, another dimension to the garden," she says. Inspired, I ordered solar lights for my driveway that welcome me home at night. It's a small improvement with a big benefit.

photo by Mike Snyder



Mike Snyder uses Leaf Scoops, also called Garden Hands, to make leaf pickup easier.

## A Memory Bank: Mike Snyder

Mike Snyder has been gardening for over 30 years on a quarter acre in the Cedar Hills neighborhood of Beaverton, Oregon. We first met way back then when he pulled into my driveway. "What are those beautiful tulips called?" he asked, and I told him they were 'Apricot Beauty'. That was the first of many visits to each other's gardens and to specialty nurseries. Mike has the best memory of anyone I know. He can tell you the name of every plant in his garden.

A member of HPSO, Rogerson Clematis Garden, and the Portland Rose Society, Mike has been an intrepid volunteer at many events. Although he's still very active, more recently he's somewhat limited by health issues. "I still love to garden as much, but because of arthritis and peripheral neuropathy I can only work one hour in the morning and one in the afternoon, instead of my former six hours," he says. He visits the neighborhood garden center every week to search for new plants, and he watches online garden shows filmed in Denmark and Ireland. There are plenty of aspects of gardening to enjoy besides the labor.

Mike's main concern now is safety. "I'm insecure on ladders, so I'm slowly taking out climbing roses and vines." He's reduced the number of roses from 21 to nine. Hiring help is not in the picture. "I don't want help. I do as much as I can. If another person gardens for me, the garden is no longer mine," he says.

photo by Mike Snyder



This hand sickle, one of Mike Snyder's favorite tools, makes quicker work of cutting back perennials than hand pruners.

To make the work more manageable, Mike relies on some helpful tools: A hand sickle with small teeth, a hand truck, a Radio Flyer wagon, and a wheelbarrow. He asks store clerks to load his bagged soil; and back home, he lets each bag fall onto the hand truck, then wheels it where he needs the soil.

"The original sickle was a gift," he says. When it wore out, he bought another. "I like using it when cutting down perennials. Instead of "snip, snip, snip" with hand pruners, I just grab a fistful of stems and slice through it." He uses Leaf Scoops, also called Garden Hands, to gather up leaves in the fall.

Mike looks for fiberglass and foam pots to replace his heavy ceramic ones. He also plants more ground covers to choke out weeds, often dividing his existing plants to spread them out further.

*continues on next page*



Mike Darcy in his garden with his newly adopted rescue dog. Sam is a well-trained four to five-year-old dog who was chosen instead of a puppy who would be more likely to get underfoot.

continued from previous page

## Plant Nerd: Mike Darcy

Mike Darcy has been gardening for more than 50 years on nearly half an acre in the Upland Neighborhood of Lake Oswego, Oregon. I first came across Mike in the 1980s at Portland's Yard Garden & Patio Show where he was hosting a live radio broadcast. Our paths continue to cross at HPSO events, especially Nerd Night (Afternoon), which he hosts. I enjoy his twice-monthly, free newsletter, which is composed primarily of local gardeners' photos and comments about their gardens. (You can sign up at [mikedarcy.com](http://mikedarcy.com).)

Retired now, Mike has more time, and his garden chores have changed too. "As I age, no more roof work, only stepladders with three steps. Falling is one of the worst things that can happen," he explains. "I pay attention to where I'm going and step slowly off a path. I wear sunscreen and a hat, as well as gloves and long-sleeved shirts to prevent getting nicked." He can do most things, but they take longer. "I take a rest, then get back to it."

Fortunately, aside from a steep driveway with a sloping front garden, his back garden is entirely level, and the paths are covered with filbert shells, packed down solidly for safe walking. "My garden is personal, and I have a hard time letting anyone else help," Mike said. But he does allow his teenage and young adult grandkids to assist, and he hires a crew to do heavy lifting and spreading compost.

Mike especially enjoys his deck, where he stages pots with blooming plants for spring, summer, and fall. "I love walking around in the morning with a cup of coffee. There are three or four places to sit along the way, and feeders with winter suet and black sunflower seeds for the birds," he adds. "In the past I saw the garden as a lot of work, but now it's my special place where I go to relax, watch birds, look at plants, and I appreciate it more than I used to," Mike says. "I like to be by myself in the garden."

~ ~ ~

Finding the pleasure in gardening while being careful to honor our limitations is the thread weaving through these conversations. If we keep making even small improvements to our gardens and adjust our work load, it may make the difference between being forced to leave and being able to stay.

For those of us who've been making soul-satisfying gardens for many, many years, this might just be the time to sit back, relax, and admire what we've created. And then go pull a few weeds.



*Barbara Blossom Ashmun is a Portland-area gardener, designer, teacher, and writer. A long-time HPSO member, she is the author of several books, most recently A Gardener's Haiku, and often contributes to the Quarterly.*

## VEGETABLE GARDENING



This is what you are striving for— a large juicy ripe tomato.

# Growing Tomatoes 101

text and photography by Karen Palmer

If I only had room for one vegetable plant, it would be a tomato. Growing tomatoes here in the Pacific Northwest is not that hard. Follow these steps to get started.

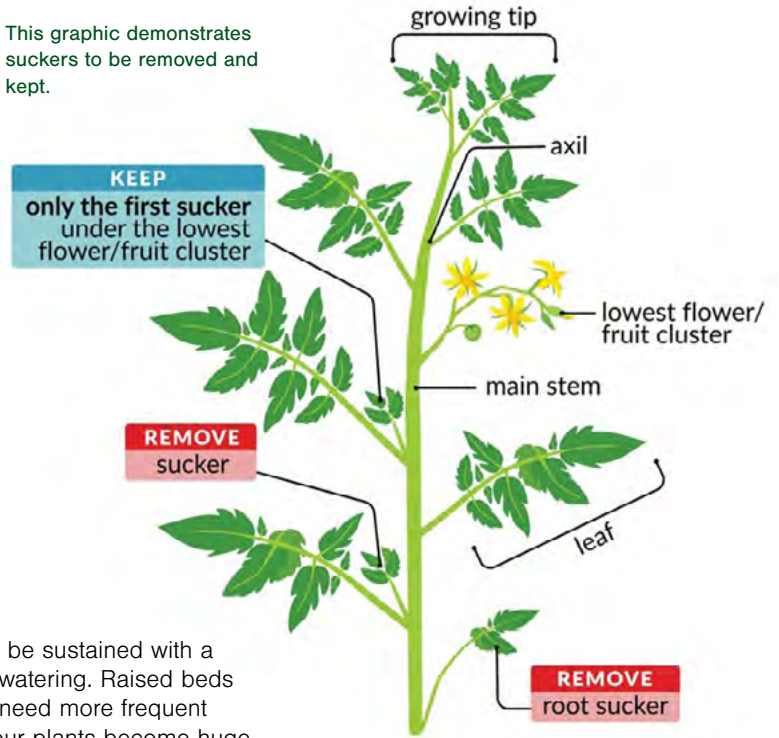
- 1. Site Selection:** Tomatoes need full sun for good production. That means at least eight hours. Check around your yard for the best sun, and remember you can always grow a tomato plant in a large pot.
- 2. Preparation:** Tomatoes need loamy soil with lots of organic matter and good drainage. If you do not have that, consider a raised bed or a large pot. If growing in-ground, I recommend a soil test since tomatoes need nitrogen and calcium. A soil test will tell you exactly how much pure nitrogen and agricultural lime to add. Simply Soil Testing, [simplysoiltesting.com](http://simplysoiltesting.com), is a reliable local resource for this. Remove all weeds and set up your watering system if needed.
- 3. Tomato Selection:** This may be the most difficult step since there are many varieties available. For beginners, I recommend buying transplants. There are Master Gardener fundraisers in the spring that sell good quality tomato plants. Garden centers and even big box stores have a large selection.

First you need to know the difference between a determinate and indeterminate tomato. Determinate tomatoes are smaller plants that do not need staking, but the fruit ripens over a short period of time. These



Author's hand is on a young sucker that should be pinched out. Another sucker that should be removed can be seen slightly to the right.

This graphic demonstrates suckers to be removed and kept.



are good for growing in containers. Indeterminate tomatoes grow on longer vines and require staking but produce fruit all summer until cold weather. Indeterminates also need pruning (see below). The plant label should specify whether it is determinate or indeterminate, or a quick Google search on the variety name usually provides the answer. I think indeterminates include more interesting varieties, so if you have the space, I recommend that type.

4. **Proper Planting:** The most common mistake is planting too early. Big box stores start selling tomato plants in March—walk on by. Most fruiting vegetables (tomato, pepper, eggplant, squash) should not be planted until Mother's Day. If you live in a colder region, wait until Memorial Day. Unlike other transplants, tomato plants should be planted deep, burying a good portion of the stem. All those little hairs on the stem will become roots and make the plant more robust. One caveat: if you have a grafted plant, you should keep the graft union above the soil line. You will know you have a grafted plant because you paid a lot for it.
5. **Maintenance:** If you have prepared the soil with the correct nutrients before or during planting, tomato plants usually do not need supplemental fertilizer during the growing season. They do need water, but most people overdo this. Water deeply and allow the soil to dry before watering again. In-ground

plantings can be sustained with a weekly deep watering. Raised beds and pots will need more frequent watering. If your plants become huge bushes with few tomatoes, you are treating them too nicely. Practice tough love—water less.

6. **Pruning:** Yes, indeterminate tomato plants should be pruned. Most of the suckers that grow from the stem nodes should be pinched or snipped out. You can leave two or three suckers but no more than that. Pruning will result in earlier, larger fruit and fewer diseases. Here is a link to a short video on tomato pruning I made during COVID when I could not conduct demonstrations in person: [youtube.com/watch?v=oVMSbqIROY4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVMSbqIROY4). Note: please ignore the red plastic in the video. I was experimenting that year and no longer use plastic for weed suppression for environmental reasons. I have found that a thick layer of mulch works just as well and also nourishes the soil.

If you maintain healthy plants, you will reduce pest and disease issues. Examine your plants regularly. If you do see anything suspicious, take a photo and contact your local Master Gardeners. Taking the time to grow your own tomatoes will make that juicy summer tomato sandwich the best ever!



*Karen Palmer has been an avid vegetable grower since childhood, a Washington State University Master Gardener for 25 years, and an HPSO member for 20 years. She is currently serving as president of HPSO. Karen has been known to plant over 30 tomato plants, spreading the harvest throughout her community. She is really trying to keep that number under 20 these days—ask in June how successful she was. An interview of Karen in her new role as HPSO president appears on page 3.*



Heirloom indeterminate tomatoes are easy to grow.

# DESIGNING A PLANT COMMUNITY

text and photography by Leslie Davis

Your guests arrive at six this evening to enjoy a home-cooked meal. To gather ingredients, do you wander the market aisles, adding to your cart whatever catches your eye? Or do you plan the menu from your kitchen table, consulting recipes, peering into cupboards to see what you already have, making shopping lists of ingredients and their quantities?

A delicious meal, even from the most experienced cook, requires planning. The same is true of an ecologically rich garden.

The ingredients you acquire need to complement each other with balanced proportions and a well-rounded profile. Avoiding the unsatisfying hodgepodge of random accumulation requires composing a recipe beforehand. In garden design, we call this recipe a designed plant community.



Installing a designed plant community is satisfying work. We have a clear idea of how the young plants will harmoniously mature together.

In this essay, I'll take you through one example of a designed plant community that I planned. By sharing my process, I hope to inspire you to build your own community—one that is appropriate for your site and for your sense of beauty.

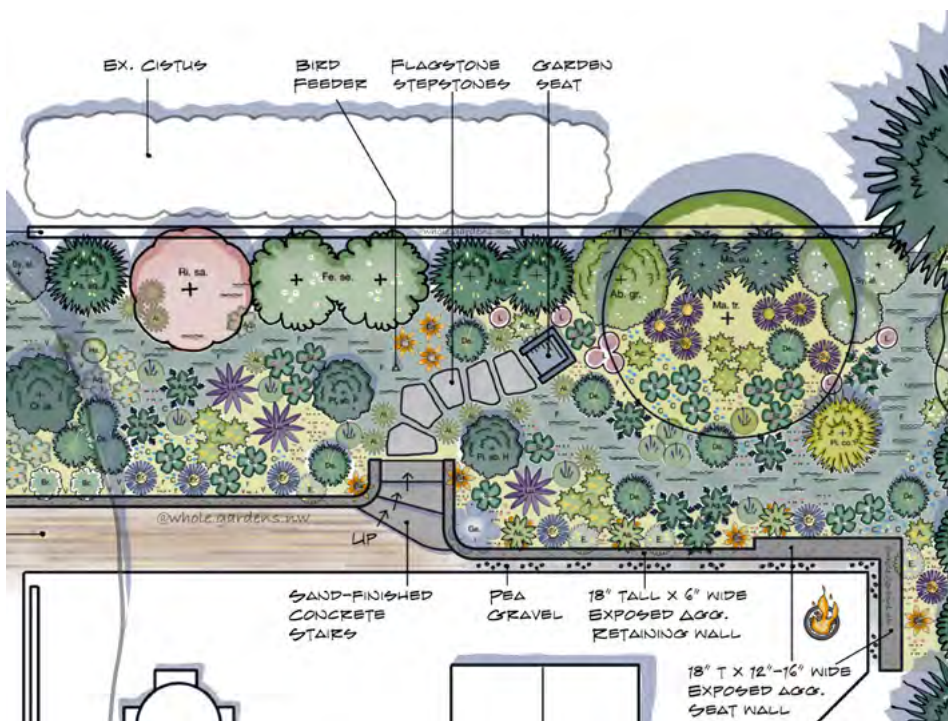
## THE PEACEFUL RETREAT GARDEN

Thea Jaster and Mike Timmermann live surrounded by Oregon white oaks and Douglas fir trees in south Eugene, Oregon. Their second story living room looks out on an upward sloping backyard. A previous owner had constructed a large, tiered deck over the space. Thea's friend once stood on this deck and said, "Someone really hated nature."

With most of the deck now gone, we resolved the challenge of the slope with a low retaining wall and stairs leading up to a solitary seat. I then turned my attention to designing the plant communities. I wanted the seat to feel immersed in plants, and I wanted the view from inside to be fabulous.

First, I listened to the land. Crumbling lean soil between bare hands, walking the larger yard, noting what was thriving (an epic Oregon white oak to the west) and what was struggling (young Portuguese laurels), attending to the progress of sunlight and shade across the ground, the winds, the crow's call—all this guides the choice of plants.

Second, I listened to the people. Thea is a botanist with a love of both native plants and garden cultivars. Flowering color delights her. Both she and Mike enjoy



Thea and Mike's Peaceful Retreat garden design is full of seasonal layers for blooms nearly year-round.



Fall planting is a great time to establish your community, but it does take patience for it to become its full expression.



This young seaside daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*) will mingle with Oregon Sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) to cover the ground around the more upright perennials.

attracting birds and butterflies. A couple of dwarf conifers they had in pots led us to talk about including more of these in the design. Their primary goal was to create a peaceful place to connect to nature.

## PERENNIALS, ANNUALS, AND BULBS

Orchestrating a year-long flowery ground is where the planning process is essential. It ensures you'll be surprised by wave after wave of blooms layered within the same garden bed.

Taking cues from Thea and Mike's trees and shrubs—their colors, forms, seasonal peaks, and cultural requirements—I jotted down a list of perennials, grasses, annuals, and bulbs. This is where that elusive energy of the muse comes in. Pay attention and write down any and everything that arises as you consider the plants in this herbaceous layer.

I thought about butterfly host plants for Thea, a progressive color palette of pinks and blues for spring into a warmer mix for summer, and a grassy texture to let it read as "meadow." This part of the process is wide open to explore any possibilities. The only filters here were the boundaries I set

earlier from observations of the site and our plans to irrigate.

It can be a long list. Let it be longer than you know you can actually fit. Let it be everything and more.

Favorites stand out: plants I knew I wanted to include. I marked these on my list with a heart: *Achillea*, *Sidalcea*, *Symphytotrichum*, *Viola*, *Fragaria*, *Lupinus*, *Deschampsia*, *Liatris*, *Clarkia*, *Erigeron*.

Now we're getting closer. To find the balance, though, we have to get visual. We have to move images around to see coherent combinations, clashes, gaps in the year, gaps in the layering, excess and lack in time and space.

I took screenshots of images online or from my own photos and put them in a collage. Moving the plant list from names to images is a useful tool for building community. You'll see how the plants relate to each other. And if they don't, it becomes clear which to eliminate.

For Thea and Mike's collage, I moved the more shade-loving plants to the left. Then sun-lovers cascaded across the page from early spring through late summer.

Plants that flower at the same time of year were grouped together. This lets you see if there's enough contrast in color and texture. I like to put groundcovers that knit everything together toward the bottom of the collage.

In this process, after eliminating plants that are repetitive, clashing, or otherwise wrong for the community, I usually notice something missing. Thea loves a good fragrant flower. There's always room for bulbs among the perennials, so I brought in the deliciously scented Scheherazade lily (*Lilium* 'Scheherazade'). I also wanted early spring blooms, so, again, I turned to bulbs with glory-of-the snow (*Chionodoxa forbesii*) and a mix of Dutch crocus (*Crocus vernus*).

Applying the plants from the collage to the site plan also revealed something missing. I had a place where I needed a large perennial, something to tower up alongside the Chief Joseph pine. And wouldn't it be fabulous, I thought, if it were something that bloomed as the pine changed from green to yellow in the fall to really amp up that view? Black and blue salvia (*Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue') fit perfectly.

## CONCLUSION

Gazing softly upon the mingled colors and winged activity of self-sustaining nature, you sit and feel your body calm. The well-designed community of plants greets you with beauty and a sense of rest, leaving you as satisfied as a well-prepared meal.



*Leslie Davis has been designing and installing landscape gardens in the Pacific Northwest since 2004. With the Willamette River in her blood and Doug firs dappling her earliest memories, she focuses her work through her business, Whole Gardens, on enhancing sense of place, habitat, and access to nature's beauty. Find her plant-of-the-month blog and other essays on her website, [wholegardensnw.com](http://wholegardensnw.com).*

GARDEN RESILIENCE

# Lessons from the January 2024 Storm

by Virginia Fuller

My suburban neighborhood, in west Portland, Oregon, is blessed with a canopy of native oaks and large conifers. These trees provide cooling shade for the whole neighborhood. About 25 years ago, my daughter, Joanne Fuller, and I used concepts from Anne Lovejoy's book, *The American Mixed Border: Gardens for All Seasons*, to plant a garden under some of these trees in my backyard.

We eliminated the badly shaded and struggling lawn. We retained a half-moon shaped concrete patio, native oaks, large mature rhododendrons, and mid-sized Japanese maples. We edged the patio with large river rocks, then underplanted the existing trees and shrubs with shade tolerant plants. The perennials and ferns are planted close together covering most of the ground during the growing season. Medium sized shrubs like dogwoods, hydrangeas, and camellias visually connect the ground plain with the taller preexisting trees and rhododendrons. This diversity of plant material keeps the garden interesting for most of the year.



Only four months after the storm, the diverse mix of plants that make up my spring and summer garden had—surprisingly—rebounded.

Like many shade gardens, mine has fewer flowering plants than typical sunny gardens. Since most of the color and visual interest comes from the leaves, the plants were chosen for a variety of leaf shape and variegation. I really like the combination of plants with brown or black leaves and/or markings planted next to very green or golden foliage. So this mix is repeated throughout the space using different plants.

Two years ago on January 13, 2024, Portland was hit with freezing rain, heavy snow, and high winds that caused

long-term damage across our region. Due to the canopy of old, somewhat shallow rooted trees, my neighborhood was hit hard. Two large trees fell in my garden and across my neighbors' roof resulting in significant damage to their home. My back fence was flattened with my camellias, clematis, and other plants crushed underneath. The falling trees and fences resulted in a tangle of power lines across my garden.

Recovery from this storm took almost a year. Once fallen trees and debris were removed, workers trampled my yard as

photo by Gerard Forsman



The back fence of my garden lying on the ground after the January 2024 storm.

photo by Virginia Fuller



In January 2024, this large pine tree fell across three yards, damaging my neighbors' home and my garden.



My combination of *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty', *Podophyllum pleianthum*, black mondo grass, *Helleborus* hybrids, *Iris foetidissima*, *Ligularia* 'The Rocket', and assorted ferns was flourishing within a few months after the storm.

they rebuilt my neighbors' house. The power, phone, and cable companies couldn't agree on who owned the obsolete power lines that were draped across my backyard. The downed fences couldn't be lifted until the power lines were removed. Additional trees were considered future hazards so they were trimmed or removed causing more disruption. The neighbors' contractors finally left my yard in February 2025. When all the repairs were complete, my shade garden was a lot sunnier, and, amazingly, my abused plants had survived and even thrived.

Watching my garden recover has been a reminder of plant resilience. It turns out that some plants can be buried by a collapsed fence, cut off from light for much of the spring, and still survive. I thought I would have to replace all the shrubs on the fence line and at least some of the perennials. Instead, the ferns and primroses kept growing up through the downed fence panels. When we propped the fences back up in April, a few months after the storm, all the plants were alive. My white Japanese camellia planted along the fence line sprang back

and bloomed prolifically this winter.

Although I have gardened in shade for years, I was reminded that shade has many hues. My garden is still not a sun garden. However, the storm damage helped it evolve from a densely shaded garden to one with dappled, lighter shade. One of my plant combinations

features Chinese mayapples (*Podophyllum pleianthum* and *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty'), black mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'), hellebore (*Helleborus*) hybrids, Stinking Iris (*Iris foetidissima*), Leopard Plant (*Ligularia* 'The Rocket'), and assorted ferns. All of these plants did very well in a heavily shaded but warm spot near the concrete patio. Since the storm they have been receiving a lot more sun, and most have grown in both size and vigor. I find that brown or black-leaved plants like black mondo grass look better in the dappled shade.

The only plants I may move from this area are the *Podophyllum*. 'Spotty Dotty' gets a shaft of hot afternoon sun, so the leaves come up, burn, die, and then new leaves emerge. This can't be good for the long-term health of the plant. *Podophyllum pleianthum* doesn't like even filtered light, so this spring I plan to move it to the shadiest spot in my garden. My blue lacecap hydrangea and plants with significant white variegation like *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima', a shrubby dogwood with white-edged leaves, now burn in summer. I will lift and move the hydrangea this spring; the dogwood is too large to move so I think I will live with some sunburn.

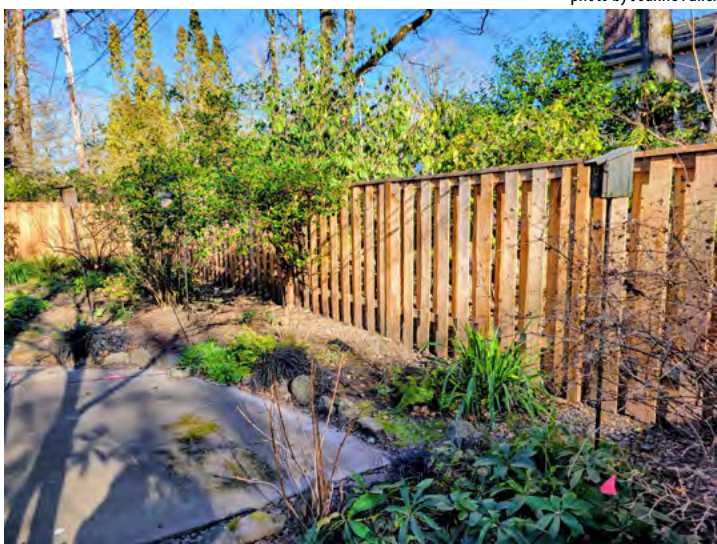
All the workers walking through my backyard during the construction next door, the tree removal, and the building of new fences compacted my soil. At 88 years old, my garden maintenance is done by others. They will add compost annually, but I am not going to pay them to remediate this compacting. So my plants will have to live with compacted soil, and they seem to be doing fine.

This whole experience has been a lesson about how flexible and resilient a garden can be, and how I need to be flexible as a gardener. It is a life lesson for all of us.



*Virginia Fuller has been passionate about growing things her whole life. Moving to Oregon in 1972 with her husband and young family, she planted some of Oregon's first vineyards and grew veggies at Tualatin Vineyards in Banks, Oregon. For the past 25 years or so, she has been planting and enjoying her current garden near Sunset High School in Beaverton, Oregon.*

photo by Joanne Fuller



View of my garden this January 2026: pretty sparse this time of year but very alive.



## Color and Happiness in the Same Place

by Jim Mitchell



Plants with hot-colored blossoms are available to brighten late summer gardens.

First of all, let's be clear about the name. The N and the M in N&M Nursery's name are not short for "North Marion," "Needs Money," or "Not Much." The letters honor Natasha and Maraya, daughters of Sean and Rosie Sullivan, the owners and driving force behind N&M.

The nursery name evolved when the girls were toddlers. Another girl and a boy came later, but the name went unchanged. As both the siblings and the business grew, Sean and Rosie started a wholesale herb business and balanced the demands of parenthood.

That was back in 1992. Previously, Sean had worked in logging and lumber and knew hard work. Rosie had worked at Al's Nursery in Portland, Oregon, and learned to propagate and grow things. Before long, they had a small wholesale herb business in Hubbard, just north of Woodburn, about 20 miles south of Portland.

Jack Bigej, owner of Al's Nursery, gave them a small greenhouse, originally intended to cover a boat. Rosie seized the greenhouse to grow more herbs. Sean embraced working for himself, and N&M was on its way. A growing family and a mortgage are big motivators to work hard.

photo courtesy N&M Nursery



N&M offers creative containers planted with succulents.

photo by Jim Mitchell



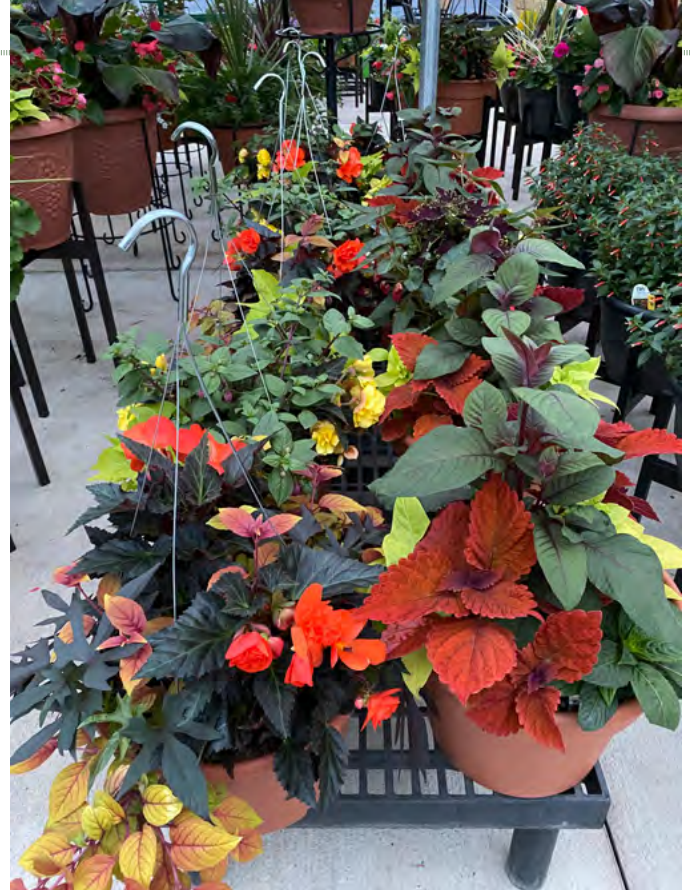
Rosie and Sean Sullivan started N&M Herb Nursery in 1992.

photo by Jim Mitchell



The nursery grows succulents in a wide array of colors.

photo courtesy N&M Nursery



Colorful hanging pots filled with mixed varieties are an N&M specialty.

photo by Jim Mitchell

The wholesale herb business was difficult but went well. To expand, they made the leap to retail, initially at farmers' markets, then at home and garden shows throughout the Pacific Northwest.

"It was truly a family affair back then," Sean recalls. "If the kids were old enough, they helped with the many chores those 'pop-up' retail stores entail. If they weren't old enough, they went along anyway, tucked in a crib under the sales tables."

Somehow, Sean and Rosie made it work. Both the kids and the business grew together.

"We wanted a family business, and the kids were part of it. When they were old enough to drive the trucks and manage the sales, they took over," Sean says proudly. "To teach them lessons, Rosie and I actually sold our plants to them wholesale. Then, they went out and sold the plants retail. Their 'profits' put them through college."

The next move came at the urging of a friend. It was an auction of eight run-down acres on Feller Road, about six miles north of Hubbard. "You should bid on it and maybe have a nursery," the friend said. They did. And got the land at a fire-sale price.

That was in 2004. But the eight acres were a mess. It took them four years before N&M could convert the place into a retail nursery. "Hard work. It's all I can say," Rosie notes. "By that time, the kids were out of the house. I vowed to give the retail site all my energy for two years."

She did, and N&M continued to grow. In 2020, something bad happened, which ultimately turned into something good for them. It was COVID. That spring and summer, farmers' markets shut down.

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In August, Rosie checks a greenhouse readying plants for the nursery's fall open days.

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"We had no place to sell anything. Our greenhouses were bursting with material, our retail nursery was still new and relatively remote," Sean said. "We weren't sure what was going to happen."

But COVID became a bonus to retail nurseries everywhere. That spring, N&M welcomed folks who had been shut in, looking to get outside and garden. "COVID saved us," Rosie says.

But it was more than COVID that launched N&M to a new level. The Sullivans honed an ability to blend customer needs with innovation: Sean is the innovator; Rosie is the artist. Together, they introduced new plants, new arrangements, and new varieties. It all worked. People loved it, and sales got better every year.

The best part of going retail? Rosie pauses for a moment, then says, "The people. Plants are therapy, and it connects us to friends, families, multi-generations, fellow gardeners. I love it." She continues, "While we work in the dirt, we sell happiness. I really believe gardening is entertainment. People are always happy to find us."

A visitor to N&M can't help but appreciate all the colors. Rosie's arranging skill charms gardeners. She embroidered as a teen, and those years created a talent for mixing and matching colors in hanging baskets and pots. Now, the nursery is filled with color—red fuchsias, purple heliotrope, yellow begonias, and much, much more.

"I compare what we do to painting with colors and textures," Sean adds. He notes that, "Customers find us because they want something colorful, cheerful, and creative, and they are always looking for something new."

The Sullivans find their inspiration not only in their work, but in their time away from the business, when they get "re-energized," as Rosie calls it. The N&M Herb Nursery is open only in the spring and summer for a 120-day stretch and then again for a bit in the fall. Meanwhile, they also sell at farmers' markets and garden shows, including HPSO's Hortlandia.

Rosie tells the story about her first sale at Hortlandia, then held in a cramped exhibit hall at the Washington County fairgrounds in Hillsboro, Oregon. Retailers sold their products, and the Hardy Plant Society took a percentage of the sales revenues.

"We brought non-hardy plants and too many of them, which I learned we weren't supposed to do," she says. She felt better when Hortlandia mainstay, Bruce Wakefield, told her later that N&M products were popular at the show. "He also made sure we came back," she says with a wry smile.

What does the future hold for N&M? Lots of colorful annuals and perennials, plus owners always on the lookout for something new. In other words, steady as she goes.

"We're going to be at this for at least another 10 years," Rosie says. "We love bringing happiness into people's lives."



*Jim Mitchell is a retired journalist and long-time HPSO member. If gardeners like color, enjoy variety, and seek happiness, he recommends a visit to N&M.*



N&M seeks new varieties each year, such as this Agastache, a "bee-licious plant."

## N&M Nursery

1702 Feller Road NE  
Hubbard, Oregon 97032  
[nandmherbnursery.com](http://nandmherbnursery.com)  
(503) 981-9060

In 2026, the nursery is open March 20 to July 13 and September 25 to October 5.

N&M will also be present at several home and garden shows and multiple farmers' markets in the Portland area.

N&M is a member of the Cascade Nursery Trail, an alliance of eight Willamette Valley independent and family-owned specialty nurseries, [cascadenurserytrail.com](http://cascadenurserytrail.com).

*"We show you a dream and sell you a promise."*

Rosie Sullivan

# A GARDENER'S SEASONAL CHECKLIST

## Spring & Early Summer

by Katrina Alfano

As we step into the spring season, here are some things you could be doing in your garden.

### April

- If you have any bulbs for summer and fall blooms, now's the time to get them in the ground, if the soil is workable. You should be able to find Asiatic lilies, hardy gladiolus, tuberous begonias, and dahlias at your local nursery.
- Purchasing a few bags of earthworm castings and top-dressing about two inches along the drip line of trees, shrubs, and throughout your perennial beds will provide nutrients heading into the growing season.
- If you have established mason bee houses, it's time to give them a quick go over with a dry towel and fill them with new bamboo reeds. Any mason bee cocoons that you've harvested and kept in cold storage can be brought out to the houses to hatch once daytime and nighttime temperatures are consistently 55°F. If you are in need of cocoons or any mason bee supplies, local nurseries should be in stock by this point in the season.
- Prepare the ground and purchase this year's potatoes and onions. Plant along with any leafy greens.

### May

- Get any supporting structures ready for flowering sweet peas and head to your local nursery for some starts. There should be plenty of varieties to choose from, ready to be planted.



Asiatic lilies rise above *Monarda* in Linda Wisner's garden. Plant lily bulbs in April.

- If any perennials need dividing, do it now before the summer months. Make sure to top-dress the newly divided plant material with fresh compost and give them a good soak.
- Mulch with wood chips or compost. At least two inches of mulch will help retain soil moisture as we prepare for the upcoming seasonal heat.
- If you're interested in increasing the beneficial insect populations within the garden, sweet alyssum, yarrow, and dill will surely help. Plant these allies among your ornamental and edible beds to insure diversity throughout the garden.

■■■  
*Katrina Alfano is an HPSO member and has worked at Portland Nursery for over a decade. She specializes in establishing mason bee and bird habitat. Residing in Southeast Portland with her husband, she enjoys their garden, which includes fruit trees, herbs, and plenty of birdbaths.*

### June

- The month of June is when I begin planning the garden's summer watering routine. Take note of what is newly planted, keep an eye on the daily weather forecast, and adjust where necessary.
- Roses are starting to bloom. Make a trip to one of Portland's rose gardens for inspiration and begin fertilizing your own roses.
- Our warmer season crops such as tomatoes, melons, beans, and squash should have their sites prepped with structures in place for optimal growth. If needed, add lime to help prevent blossom end rot. Whether in pots or the ground, by this point in the season, the daily temperatures should be warm enough to bring outside your seedlings that were sown indoors in late winter.

Sweet peas need supporting structures. These are growing on branches from a contorted mulberry.



# Can Magnet Plants Help Honey Bees and Wild Bees Co-Exist in Gardens?

by Gail Langellotto



Here you can see first season Grosso lavender, growing amid an array of native plants and native cultivars.

Preliminary results from a new study by the Oregon State University Garden Ecology Lab suggest that nectar-rich, non-native “magnet plants,” such as lavender, may attract honey bees away from nearby native pollinator plants on which native specialist bees are dependent.

Even though more than 670 bee species have been collected and identified through studies of garden biodiversity, the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) is by far the dominant pollinator in urban gardens across the globe.<sup>1</sup> The ubiquity and superabundance of honey bees in gardens can negatively impact native bees via competition for nectar and pollen on shared host plants.<sup>2</sup> This is because honey bee workers are extremely abundant and efficient foragers for nectar and pollen.

photo by Devon Johnson



By contrast, most bees are solitary, where only a single mother forages to provide for her brood. Solitary bees simply can't compete with the foraging force of honey bees. Recently, the negative impact of honey bees on native bees was directly demonstrated on an island off the Italian coast. When honey bee hives on the island were temporarily closed, the abundance of available nectar and pollen

resources increased in less than a day, as did the foraging efficiency and success of native bees.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the bees that you see foraging on lavender plants are non-native honey bees or native bumblebees.

resources increased in less than a day, as did the foraging efficiency and success of native bees.<sup>3</sup>

Removing honey bees from gardens, of course, is impractical to impossible. However, it may be possible to reduce competition between honey bees and native bees by growing magnet plants. Magnet plants are those that attract a high abundance, but low diversity, of pollinators. Lavender is considered a magnet plant,<sup>4</sup> in part because honey bees represent 88 to 97 percent of its visitors.<sup>5</sup> Lavender likely functions as a magnet plant due to its copious nectar flow and its ability to replenish nectar stores after bee foraging.<sup>6</sup>

Overall pollinator species richness and diversity is low on lavender, particularly when compared to native plant species growing in the same landscape.<sup>7</sup> Notably, two vulnerable species of native bumble bee, *Bombus caliginosus* and *Bombus fervidus*,<sup>8</sup> are known to frequently forage from lavender.<sup>9</sup> We suspect that lavender and other nectar-rich magnet plants are important nectar and energy resources for male bumble bees (including vulnerable species), as well as for honey bee workers.

The ability of magnet plants to mediate competition among pollinator species is particularly important for specialist bees that have a narrow diet breadth and are thus incapable of easily switching to other flowering plants. Specialist bees are less common and underrepresented in garden systems. Although they make up between 25 to 35 percent of the U.S. bee fauna, only 13 percent of garden bees



Lavender has a long seasonal bloom period and continues to produce nectar during dry periods. This photo was taken in August 2019, after a season of growth with no supplemental water, at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center in Aurora, Oregon.

are specialist foragers.<sup>10</sup> Thus, magnet plants such as lavender have the potential to positively benefit bee conservation in two ways. First, some magnet plants may be an important source of nectar flow for vulnerable bumble bee species (e.g., *Bombus caliginosus* and *Bombus fervidus*). Second, when magnet plants attract and consolidate honey bees away from forage plants that specialist bees are dependent upon, it allows a more diverse pollinator community to prosper in gardens.

In its preliminary study, the OSU Garden Ecology Lab found evidence to suggest that incorporating lavender into pollinator gardens that focus on native plants reduces competition among bee species. Specifically, we found that honey bees were significantly more abundant on lavender, compared to any of the 26 native plants or native cultivars growing in the same garden.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, we found that Müller's index (a measure of apparent competition between species) decreased for honey bees and for bumblebees when lavender was in peak bloom.<sup>12</sup>

Funded by HPSO and other members of the Garden Ecology League, our preliminary study was designed to quantify pollinator visitation on native plants versus native cultivars, rather than to detect interspecific competition between bees. However, we customarily plant Grosso lavender in all of our plant-pollinator field studies, so that we have a common benchmark we can use to compare results among studies. The results of this

preliminary magnet plant study are thus suggestive, not conclusive.

Starting this summer, we are launching a new study that manipulates the presence and intensity of magnet plants adjacent to native plants, to understand how the presence and bloom display of magnet plants may impact competition and coexistence among pollinator species. Although we are using lavender as our magnet plant, we will also assess the extent to which results might apply to other nectar-rich garden plants. We anticipate collecting data from this field study for at least three years, as our previous work suggests that the value of lavender as a magnet plant increases as the plant matures. We can't wait to share the results with you.



*Gail Langellotto is a professor of horticulture at Oregon State University and Principal Investigator of the Oregon State University Garden Ecology Lab. She holds a B.S. in biology and an M.S. and Ph.D. in entomology, all from the University of Maryland. She is a regular contributor to the HPSO Quarterly.*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Bell et al. (2023). Assessing five decades of garden bee studies. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 5, 1102360.

<sup>2</sup> Carneiro & Martins (2012). Africanized honey bees pollinate and preempt the pollen of *Spondias mombin* (Anacardiaceae) flowers. *Apidologie*, 43(4), 474-486; Cane & Tepedino (2017). Gauging the effect of honey bee pollen collection on native bee communities. *Conservation Letters*, 10(2), 205-210.

<sup>3</sup> Pasquali et al. (2025). Island-wide removal of honeybees reveals exploitative trophic competition with strongly declining wild bee populations. *Current Biology*, 35(7), 1576-1590.

<sup>4</sup> Gilpin et al. (2019). Do mass flowering agricultural species affect the pollination of Australian native plants through localised depletion of pollinators or pollinator spillover effects? *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 277, 83-94; Joslin, E. (2019). *Perimeter land management for pollination and pest control services in apple orchards* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southampton).

<sup>5</sup> Garbuzov & Ratnieks (2014). Quantifying variation among garden plants in attractiveness to bees and other flower-visiting insects. *Functional Ecology*, 28(2), 364-374; Wilson, et al. (2024). *The Bee Communities of Young Living Lavender Farm, Mona, Utah, USA*. *Diversity*, 16(2), 119.

<sup>6</sup> Carisio et al. (2022). Estimates of nectar productivity through a simulation approach differ from the nectar produced in 24 h. *Functional Ecology*, 36(12), 3234-3247.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson et al. (2022). The bee fauna associated with Pacific Northwest (USA) native plants for gardens. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 4(10), e12801; Hayes (2025). *Garden plants for pollinators in the Pacific Northwest: Improving our understanding of the value of native plants, native cultivars, and lavender*. Ph.D. dissertation, Oregon State University.

<sup>8</sup> Hatfield et al. (2014). IUCN Assessments for North American *Bombus* spp. *The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation*, Portland, OR.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson et al. 2022, *ibid.*; Hayes 2025, *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Bell et al. 2023, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Hayes 2025, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Hayes 2025, *ibid.*

# BOOK REVIEWS

Phillip Oliver, a retired librarian and former HPSO Board member, reviews three new large-format, coffee-table-style books that provide an escape to private gardens in different corners of the globe, from the plains of Texas to the East Coast and to Great Britain.

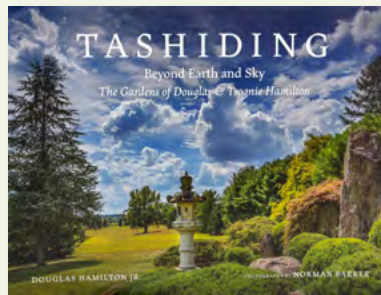


## Gardens of Texas: Visions of Resilience from the Lone Star State

by Pam Penick  
(Timber Press, 2025)

Gardens are probably not the first thing that comes to mind when you think about the Lone Star State. Harsh weather conditions present challenges in general, and now even the most experienced gardeners are dealing with the additional burden of climate change. Author Pam Penick (of the popular *Digging* blog) traveled to every corner of the state and visited 27 gardens, interviewing gardeners to find out how they are coping with the changes.

The gardens, beautifully photographed by Kenny Braun, are organized by the five geographical regions of the state, with 10 to 14 pages devoted to each garden. Ranging from desert oasis to organic farms, the gardeners talk about how they are meeting the challenges of changing climate and adhering to eco-friendly practices. Each chapter gives plant suggestions as well as a "Try This at Home" aside that provides readers with ideas.



## Tashiding: Beyond Earth and Sky

by Douglas Hamilton Jr.  
Photography by Norman Barker  
(ORO Editions, 2025)

"Tashiding" loosely translates to "a very auspicious place." It is an appropriate name for the garden of Douglas and Tsognie Hamilton, located in the countryside near Baltimore, Maryland. The name is in honor of a monastery in the historic Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, where Tsognie spent her childhood. The couple met in the early 1970s when Douglas was in Sikkim on a hiking trip. They married in 1974 and settled in the United States. In 1998, they purchased the property on which they have created an extraordinary garden.

The property was neglected, and the couple began extensive work, clearing weeds and brambles and planting thousands of trees. Years of development followed, including expanding the existing pond, establishing streams, and bringing in tons of stone. Today the garden is a "unique blend of East and West," featuring stunning stone work and water features, as well as a tea house, an aviary, a courtyard garden, and a rose and peony garden. The garden is often open for garden groups and tours.

This is a sumptuous book highlighted by the stunning photography of Norman Barker, who spent years photographing every aspect of the garden.



## The Secret Gardeners: Britain's Creatives Reveal Their Private Sanctuaries

by Victoria Summerley  
(Frances Lincoln, 2025)

This book is an updated edition (first published in 2017) and another stunning publication by the British publisher Frances Lincoln, which specializes in these gorgeous coffee-table-style books.

The book profiles 25 gardens belonging to English celebrities. Some of the names may be unfamiliar to readers in the United States, but a large majority of them are—Jeremy Irons, Rupert Everett, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Prue Leith, Sting, and the late Ozzy Osbourne, to name a few. Most of the gardens are cared for by employees, although some of the owners do some work in their gardens themselves.

The gardens are lushly photographed by Hugo Rittson Thomas (whose own garden is included), and the text by Victoria Summerley gives an extensive history of each garden and its significance to the owner.



*Phillip Oliver is a former HPSO board member. He gardens in Vancouver, Washington, and documents happenings in his garden (which is often opened to HPSO members) and elsewhere on his blog Dirt Therapy ([phillipoliver.blogspot.com](http://phillipoliver.blogspot.com)).*

A closeup of Virginia Fuller's garden, page 16. Photo by Virginia Fuller.





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[www.hardyplantsociety.org](http://www.hardyplantsociety.org)

*The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose purpose is educational and whose mission is to nurture the gardening community.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, April 3 and Saturday, April 4, Hortlandia Spring Plant Sale at the Westside Commons Wingspan Event Center (see page 1)

### AFTER HOURS:

Thursday, April 9 — Farmington Gardens, 5-7 pm

Sunday, April 19 — Pomarius Nursery, 5-7 pm

Saturday, May 2 — Garden Corner, 6-8 pm

Thursday, May 21 — Adelman Peony Gardens, 6-8 pm

Thursday, June 18 — Little Prince of Oregon, 5-7 pm

Wednesday, July 8 — Paradise Acres Garden Center, 6-8 pm

Thursday, July 23 — Portland Nursery on Stark, time TBD

### PLANT FEST

tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 26

Watch for more program information and open garden information in HPSO emails and at [hardyplantsociety.org](http://hardyplantsociety.org)

Lisa Fuller enjoys a view of her garden from the comfort of her home, page 10. Photo by Lisa Fuller.



The native Pacific three-banded ladybug, page 14. Photo by Amy Campion.



Plants with hot-colored blossoms at N&M Nursery, page 8. Photo by Jim Mitchell.

