

THE DIRT

Winter Issue 2025, Volume 51, Issue 4



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Dear Fellow VNLA Members, Colleagues, & Friends,

"We have been having a real Vermont winter." That is what I have heard from a lot of people lately. I can't say that I am personally too happy about that, however it is a good thing over all. We keep working all winter so it makes our lives harder but I am sure the ski resorts have liked the weather and the warming trend is, of course, not a good sign for climate change.



This is going to be a year of changes for the VNLA. We will be searching for Kristina's replacement again (see the job posting on page 4 with a full description on the website). That is a challenging process. We have learned a lot from our past experiences and I am confident we will find a good candidate to help us into the future. We are also looking for the next round of leadership on the board and to help with the Flower Show.

This will be my last year as president and Ralph Fit-Gerald has stepped down as Vice-President, which went into effect at the VNLA annual business meeting on February 12. Please join me in thanking him for all of his time and effort. He has been integral in everything we have done over his tenure on the board and beyond.

The flower show is in need of new team members and leaders. It is a huge project and we need a super team moving forward to replace the super team that has worked on the show for many years now. There are key people who are looking to step away from leadership roles and we need new feet to fill those boots. Please don't hesitate to talk to any of us involved to help with the next wave of shows.

I truly hope everyone is doing great and having enjoyed some R&R in preparation for the 2026 landscaping and nursery season just ahead.

All my best

Gabe Bushey, VNLA President.



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Cover Photo Credit:
Jake Dombek taken in
Monkton, VT.

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VNLA COMMITTEES

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**VERMONT CERTIFIED HORTICULTURIST
COMMITTEE CHAIR**
Linzy Vos

**VOLUNTEER PROJECT OUTREACH
COMMITTEE CHAIR**
Linzy Vos

2026 VNLA Board Meeting Dates

March 25, 2026
June 18, 2026
September 10, 2026
November 19, 2026
January 7, 2027

Board meeting are from 9:30am-3:30 pm;
locations to be determined.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association invites applications for their Executive Director, a part-time, work from home, flexible management position working with a board of directors/non-profit. Candidates should have experience in management, communications, event planning, accounting, marketing, and computer skills. View the full job posting at www.vnlavt.org/news-events/job-postings/. To apply, please send a cover letter and resume to hello@vnlavt.org.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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[**READ THE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT HERE!**](#)

THERE'S STILL TIME TO RENEW
YOUR 2026 VNLA MEMBERSHIP
[**HERE!**](#)

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THE BUZZ

the low down on what's up!

The 2026 Winter Meeting Recap!

by Kristina MacKulin

The VNLA Winter Meeting & Trade Show was held on February 13, 2026 in the Dion Family Student Center at Saint Michael's College. We had 146 people in attendance and 22 exhibitors. The weather was a bit snowy but cleared in the afternoon. We were sorry to miss those who were unable to make the trek. Lots of snowplowing this year!

First, we would like to extend **OUR GRATITUDE** to our Education Sponsors for their generous support:

- * **Prides Corner Farms** - Keynote Speaker Sponsor
- * **Van Berkum Nursery** - Maple Sponsor
- * **Vermont Invasives** - Maple Sponsor
- * **Homestead Landscaping** - Contributing Sponsor

Our exhibitors this year included: Agresource, Inc., Cobble Creek Nursery, Fairfax Perennial Farm, Full Circle Gardens, Gagne Insurance Agency, Horsford Gardens & Nursery, Ideal Concrete Block/Pavers by Ideal, Jamaica Central Labour Organization, MTE Equipment Solutions, Inc., New England Nursery Sales, Northern Nurseries, NutriHarvest, OESCO, Poolscapes Vermont, Prides Corner Farms, Read Custom Soils, Saratoga Sod Farm, Tuckahoe Turf, UVM Extension/VT Invasives, Van Berkum Nursery, VT Agency of Agriculture, Foods & Markets, and Vermont Stone Art.

The day began with two people taking the VT Certified Horticulturist exam. Our keynote address was from **Katie Dubow**, global trendsetter and president of Garden Media Group. Katie shared insights from the **2026 Garden Trends Report: Lemonading** ([download here](#)). Katie explored the powerful forces shaping the future of gardening and how technology, sustainability, and self-expression are redefining trends and what consumers desire.

Next came a morning break giving everyone a chance to visit with exhibitors. We reconvened for the **VNLA annual business meeting**, led by VNLA President Gabriel Bushey. The meeting opened with thanking the new 2025 members:

- American Beauty Gardens – Casey Bradley
- B&B Nurseries – Evan Guerra
- BLUE Stormwater Program – Michelle Lockhart



Katie Dubow, Garden Media Group.

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- Lawrence Property Management, LLC – Kyle Lawrence
- MycoEvolve – Jess Rubin
- NutriHarvest – Anju Krivov
- Precision Work, Inc. – Jordan Turcott
- Sedge & Soil – Devon Snyder

And our most recent 2026 new members:

- Bagley Pond Perennials
- E.C. Brown Nursery & Landscaping
- James Talbott



Highlights of the annual meeting included a recap of the VNLA Annual Report, the presentation of VNLA and Industry Awards, and the board of directors' elections. Please see the feature article on award winners which begins on page 8. Ralph Fitz-Gerald, outgoing VNLA Vice-President, was congratulated for his eight years of service on the board as well as serving as the Program Committee Chair for many of those years. Ralph is going to be missed and we wish him well in his camper van journeys! The following were re-elected to the VNLA Board of Directors for two-year terms: Aaron Smith, director, Bruce Gagne, Treasurer, and Linzy Vos, Vice-President. Caylen Padua was elected to a two-year term to fill a board of director vacancy. **Welcome to new VNLA board member Caylen Padua!**

After the lunch break held in the Alliot Student Center, attendees gathered for the **VNLA Industry Awards Presentation of Projects**. There were six winners this year and you can read all about their winning projects beginning on page 15.

We had one more chance to visit with vendors and then the four concurrent afternoon sessions were held.

Ray DeFeo from **Prides Corner Farms** spoke about *"Garden Center | Retail Trends and Where the Future Lies"*, which focused on how independent garden centers can become more successful by embracing new retail trends that will help attract more customers. Over in the Alliot Student Center, **Ben Dillner**, VT Agency of Ag Plant Health Specialist, **Judy Rosovosky**, VT State Entomologist, and **Ginger Nickerson**, UVM Extension Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator, spoke about nursery inspection findings, pest survey data, and information on high priority pests relevant to the ornamental hort industry.



Cheryl Dorschner and her book swap table.



The last two afternoon sessions of the day were given by **Grace Lynn**, VT State Botanist - *"Restoring Abundance and Conserving Rarity: Helping Vermont's Native Plants Thrive"*, which included a vision on how we can all work together to restore some of the former abundance of native keystone plant species in Vermont.

Concurrently, **Becca and Tim Lindenmeyr** spoke about *"Sharing our Business/ Horticulture Journey"* with a very interested group who had lots of questions about their journey and many had their own stories to share.

On-going throughout the day was the opportunity to take the VNLA Identification Quiz, which VJ Comai, City of Burlington City Arborist helped coordinate. The quiz contained live specimens and photos of

shrubs, trees, annuals and perennials, and the winner takes home \$100. This year's winner was David Berg! Also, VNLA member and person of many talents, Cheryl Dorschner, so graciously set-up a "free/swap" gardening/hort book table of which she donated many books from her personal collection. By the end of the meeting the table was mostly empty! A big thank you to Cheryl for this wonderful opportunity for attendees to expand one's personal library.

We were so pleased to have so many in attendance for the Winter Meeting. The day truly felt joyful as everyone gathered together for some education, conversation and camaraderie! Thank you to all for making the VNLA such a great organization to belong to!





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VNLA Award Winners - 2025/2026

by Kristina MacKulin

The winner's of the VNLA awards for 2025/26 were presented during the VNLA's Annual Business Meeting held during the Annual Winter Meeting & Trade Show on February 12, 2026 at the Saint Michael's College. We are pleased to recognize the award recipients below and extend our congratulations! Please read their glowing nomination paragraphs on our website [HERE](#). All winners will be featured in *Seven Days Newspaper* on April 22, 2026.



**Horticultural
Achievement Award
2025**
Tobi and Sally von Trapp
Waitsfield, VT

This award is given to individuals connected to the horticultural industry in Vermont, who are over 40 years of age and whose accomplishments have advanced our industry educationally, or by plant development or growing, through literature, or through outstanding personal effort. This award is the most prestigious and distinguished that can be received from the VNLA/Green Works.



**VNLA Young Nursery
Professional of the
Year Award - 2026**
Guinnevere Hand-Boniakowski
Perseid Gardens
Bristol, VT

This is an annual award that was established by the New England Nursery Association and has been adopted by the VNLA. Its purpose is to reward, to honor and to encourage participation, achievement and growth by an individual who is involved in a related horticultural industry and has not reached the age of 40 years, who has shown involvement in his or her state and/or regional nurserymen's association, has contributed to the growth and success of their company of employment and has portrayed an image to the public of what our products and services can do for them.



**Environmental Awareness
Award - 2025**
Wasted
Williston, VT

This award is given in recognition of an individual/company that has implemented an environmentally sound practice that contributes to the protection of our environment. Pictured in the photo: Rachel Binstock.



**Retailer of the Year Award
2025**
**Glebe Mountain Gardens
& Landscaping**
Londonderry, VT

This award is presented annually to a retail garden center or greenhouse operation that stands apart for their excellence in any or all of the following categories: customer service, quality of plant material, knowledge of staff, creativity and innovations in marketing and presentation of retail space, and overall customer experience and satisfaction.



**Allen B. Crane Horticultural
Employee Acknowledgement
Award - 2025**
Karen Krajacic
Rocky Dale Gardens
Bristol, VT

This award is presented annually and is sponsored by member Claussen's Florist & Greenhouse in honor of Allen B. Crane, head



grower there for over 42 years. Allen was “a great friend, wonderful colleague and an incredible grower”. This award recognizes employees that make a difference in the horticultural industry. The winner receives a cash prize of \$275. Nominees must meet the following criteria: be employed by a member business for a minimum of 5 years and be employed in the horticultural industry. Nominees should be exemplary leaders and display an ability to grow and excel in the workplace and beyond.



UVM Student Merit Award 2026 Harrison Loyd

The \$500 UVM Student Merit Award for 2026 was presented to Harrison Loyd. Harrison is a senior majoring in Landscape Design with a minor in Studio Art at UVM. He grew up in Guildford, CT. Harrison has worked for Bartlett Tree Experts, Morning Dew Landscaping and Common Roots Farm. His goal is to pursue a position at a urban landscape architecture firm.



UVM Student Merit Award 2026

Morgan Jablonski

The \$500 UVM Student Merit Award for 2026 was presented to Morgan Jablonski. Morgan is an Agroecology major and senior at UVM and grew up in the Hudson River Valley. Morgan has worked at the Burlington Farmers Market, the UVM Catamount Educational Farm and the UVM Greenhouses and started an “Agriculture Club” at UVM.

Congratulations to Harrison and Morgan and we wish them well in their journey and adventures ahead.

Consider making a nomination for a deserving recipient of a VNLA award for 2026/27. You can make a nomination by filling out this form [HERE](#).

Congratulations to all VNLA award winners!!!



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cobblecreeknursery@gmail.com



With Deep Sadness . . .



Carol Bitner Loysen, 89, theater lover, equestrian, nurturer of young people, and all-around positive, warm and creative spirit, passed away peacefully at home on January 12th 2026, surrounded by her family.

Born in Rochester, NY, Carol was the daughter of Beatrice S. and Lynn N. Bitner, both of whom were in the newspaper business and who infused her with the

tradition of journalism. She attended Wellesley and Elmira Colleges, and graduated from the Katharine Gibbs School in New York City.

In 1959, she married David Loysen, whom she met on a blind date. They moved multiple times as David was transferred to different locations with his job. In 1971 they settled in Princeton, MA, where they lived for the next 21 years. While raising her two children, Carol worked part-time as a reporter for the Holden Landmark, a small locally focused newspaper, as well as caring for several horses.

They moved to Stowe, VT, in 1992 when they bought Evergreen Gardens, a struggling garden center and together managed a

successful turnaround. In her spare time, Carol became known for her tireless volunteer work with the Stowe Theatre Guild where she was a familiar and welcoming presence. Whether assisting with front-of-house duties, designing and making costumes or supporting the Guild's mission to bring high-quality community theater to central Vermont, her commitment helped sustain the arts in the historic Town Hall Theatre.

Carol is survived by her husband, David; her son David Jr. and wife Blanca; daughter Tracy and husband Robert Duncan; grandson Isak Duncan; and her sister, Susan Weaver. She was predeceased by her parents and her brother, Laurence M. Bitner.

A celebration of Carol's life and legacy will be planned for later in the year. In her memory and in lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to local organizations that foster the arts and community spirit in Stowe or in your own hometown.

OF NOTE: Carol was a giant supporter of both the VNLA and the Vermont Flower Show, alongside her husband, David Loysen (past board member and VNLA Treasurer). Together, they helped make the VNLA and the Show what it is today. We are deeply grateful.



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Winter Webinars | VCH Exam Prep Recordings

by Kristina MacKulin

Over the past couple of months, the VNLA has collaborated with the VT Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) on a winter webinar series that were targeted to VNLA members and associates of the nursery, landscaping, and green industry, as well as anyone else interested in plant health and stewardship in Vermont.

This series provided practical information, shared context about how the Agency's Plant Health Section approaches its work, and created opportunities for people to connect directly with staff from the Plant Industry Division, and the State Botanist from Fish and Wildlife. Topics ranged from emerging approaches to communication and framing, to on-the-ground pest monitoring and nursery inspections, to pesticide certification, native plant stewardship, and collaboration across agencies to support healthy plant systems in Vermont. All sessions were approximately one hour, held online, and open to the public.

If you were not able to attend, the good news is each session has been recorded. Following is a list of the webinars that were held and the link for each one to watch them.

- **Plant Health Team: How We Work, What We Do, and Why Language Matters w/ Emilie Inoue, Plant Health Team VAAFM.** This webinar provided a high-level overview of the Plant Health Section and the work they do across Vermont. It also explored how the Section is evolving its language and framing to support a more interconnected and dimensional approach to plant health work. Together, these shifts help improve clarity, effectiveness, and shared responsibility in how we engage with complex plant health challenges. You can watch the webinar here: **Plant Health Language:** <https://youtu.be/pk47zkX-9Ls>. **Plant Health Section Work:** https://youtu.be/d_qqmaWTubc.
- **Introduced Pests, Nursery Inspections, and Plant Health Monitoring w/ Judy Rosovsky, State Entomologist & Ben Dillner, State Survey Coordinator.** This session will focused on introduced pests of concern in

Vermont, how VAAFM is involved in detection and response, and the types of pests the Plant Health Section monitors. Presenters also covered nursery inspections and shared practical, on-the-ground insight into how this work is carried out across the state and what nursery staff should know about our inspections. Watch here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP6mQh_6NrI.

- **Pesticide Certification, Licensing, and Regulatory Basics w/Bethany Creaser, Pesticide Certification & Training.** This webinar covered foundational information related to pesticide certification and licensing, the Worker Protection Standard, and other core regulatory topics that are relevant to applicators and businesses in the green industry. The session helped support understanding and compliance by clarifying key requirements and resources. Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq28o2sDICE>.
- The 4th webinar, **Restoring Abundance and Conserving Rarity: Helping Vermont's Native Plants Thrive w/ Presenter: Grace Glynn, State Botanist, Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife** was held on March 4 and explored how restoring abundance of common, site-appropriate native plants plays an important role in conserving Vermont's rarer species. From Grace's perspective, this session offered guidance on how thoughtful plant selection and stewardship practices can support healthy native plant systems at a landscape scale. You can find the link to watch the session [HERE](#).
- **A VCH Exam Prep Session** was held in late January for those who are working toward becoming a Vermont Certified Horticulturist. (Visit [HERE](#) for more details about the VCH program.) The session was led by Linzy Vos, VCH Committee Chair and was approximately one hour long. It included tips on how to study for both the written and identification parts of the exam, sample questions, and information on how the exam is graded. You can watch the session [HERE](#). The VCH exam is given at the VNLA Winter and Summer meetings and by appointment.



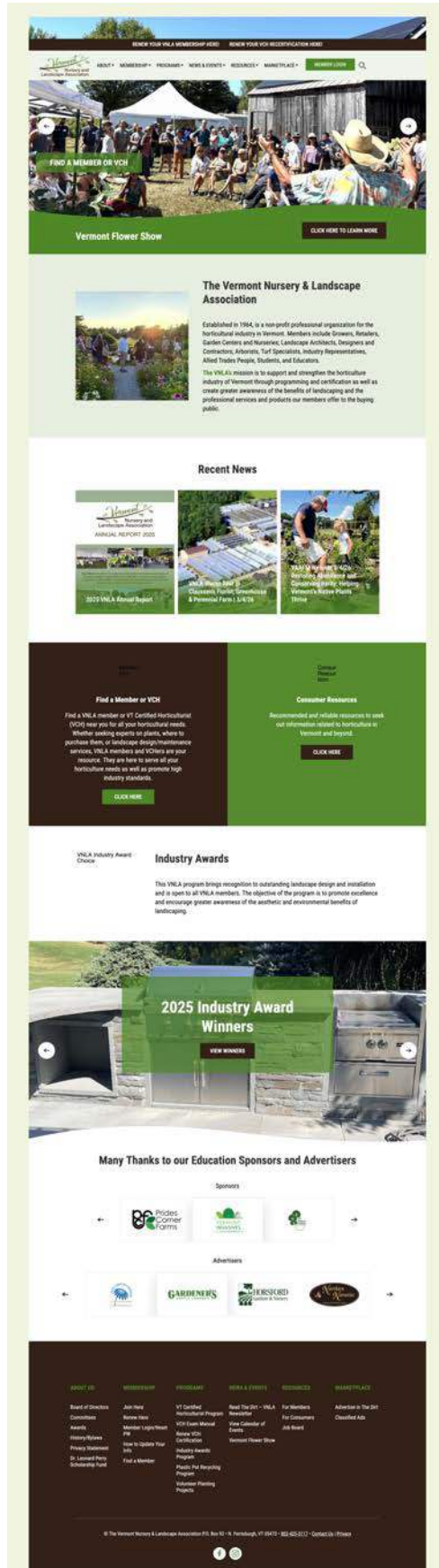
VNLA Website Refresh

by Kristina MacKulin

Over the past couple of months, the VNLA Marketing Committee has been working with our webmaster on a **website “refresh”** to the VNLA homepage. You can check it out and see our “new” look - <https://vnlavt.org/>!

The menus have been reorganized and a few new choices have been added. Under the Membership label, there is now a tab **“How to Update Your Info”**. Every VNLA member and VCH has their own personal profile page where business descriptions and photos can be added. When the public searches our membership list, this profile page displays.

Another new feature can be found under the Marketplace tab. We will now be offering **FREE CLASSIFIED ADS** to VNLA members. Contact the office if you would like to list an ad. Another free member opportunity is our **Job Board** where members can either post job openings or look at the postings. Please don't hesitate to share any feedback with us!



Welcome to our NEW 2026 VNLA Members!!

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www.bagleypondperennials.com
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Wholesale Perennial
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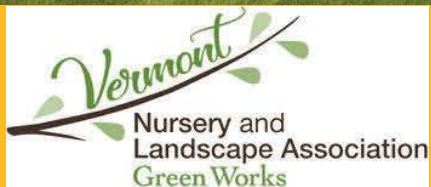
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VIEPAC | Upcoming Plant Bans

by Kristina MacKulin

The VIEPAC (VT Invasive & Exotic Plant Advisory Council) is in the midst of a name change, and how the council is formed/regulated, which will include a rule change. The current rule - "VT Noxious Weeds Quarantine" is expected to change to the "Regulated Introduced Plant Species Rule", with a name change for the council to coincide. If you might be interested in serving on this "new" council to represent the nursery/landscape trade, please contact the VNLA - hello@vnlavt.org.

The current Council has been meeting on a regular basis since the fall of 2025, working toward these new changes. At a recent meeting they voted to recommend banning the sale of the following plants:

- *Humulus japonicus* - Hook Hair Hops
- *Pyrus calleryana* - Callery (Bradford Pear)
- *Elaeagnus umbellata* - Autumn Olive
- *Euphorbia cyparissias* - Cypress Spurge

Placed on the tentative watch list are *Phellodendron amurense* - Amur Cork Tree, *Phalaris arundinaca* - Reed Canary Grass, Privet complex, *Impatiens glandulifera* - Himalayan Balsam. The Council also discussed emerging plant species that may warrant fast-tracking: *Morris alba* - White Mulberry, *Nelumbo lutea* - American Lotus, and *Miscanthus sinensis* - Maidengrass.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Ben Dillner, State Pest Survey Coordinator with the VT Agency of Agriculture, Foods and Markets at Benjamin.Dillner@vermont.gov.



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2025 VNLA Industry Award Winners - *Recognizing Excellence!*

by Kristina MacKulin



Pictured from left to right: Nate Carr, Gavin Boyce-Ratliff, Brett Towle, David Burton, and Gabe Bushey. Not pictured Caroline Dudek.

The Industry Awards Program became a VNLA program in 2009 in an effort to recognize the outstanding work of our members. The objective of this program is to promote excellence and encourage greater public awareness of the aesthetic and environmental benefits of landscaping. The Industry Awards Program is open to all current VNLA members who may enter up to three projects per year. All installed landscapes, maintenance properties or specialty type projects are eligible. Projects are judged independently of one another and by a panel of industry professionals.

A big thank you to all who took the time to share and submit their work. And a very big thank you to the judges for their time and expertise in reviewing this year's entries. Start planning now to enter a project for 2026! The deadline to submit is mid-January, 2027.

Winners were presented their awards at the Winter Meeting & Trade Show held on February 12, 2026 at St. Michael's College. The project display boards were on display and winners presented their projects to the audience. Their winning projects will also featured in *Seven Days Newspaper* on April 22, 2026. You can view the winning projects on our website [HERE](#).

EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Brett Towle
Dicot Land Studio, LLC
Charlotte, VT
Shady Grove at Shelburne Point

Gavin Boyce-Ratliff
GBR | Landscape Design, LLC
Sharon, VT & Brunswick, ME
Sterling Valley Farm

HONOR AWARDS

Nate Carr
Church Hill Landscapes, Inc.
Charlotte, VT
Charlotte Lakeside Landscape

Gabriel Bushey
Vergennes, VT
Charlotte Pool Gathering Space

David Burton
Ginkgo Design, LLC
Underhill, VT
Backyard Resort

Caroline Dudek
Landscapes
Richmond, VT
Backyard for an Active Family





2025 Excellence Award Brett Towle - Dicot Land Studio, LLC Shady Grove on Shelburne Point



About this Project: The clients built their house in the late 90's and raised their kids on Shelburne Point. The landscape around this home was well-tended and beautiful, but a prominent grove of mature trees had become neglected, with an understory dominated by invasive species and unpredictable stormwater flows.

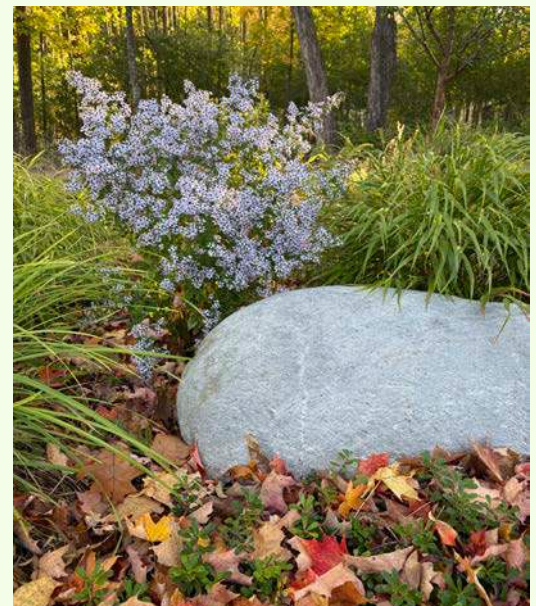
The grove of mature hickory, oak, maple, and beech features a gently curving gravel path, laid by the client, that bisects the zone. The trees were an asset: well-pruned and spaced with a tall canopy. The understory had become overwhelmed by reed canary grass, buckthorn, garlic mustard, colts foot, vinca and burdock. The paths existed, but didn't draw you in.

We hoped to improve the space in a way that felt both natural and intentional; wild but cared-for. We aimed to showcase the mature trees and accentuate the woodland archetype with rich yet restrained understory plantings that fit the surrounding landscape. The goal was to beautify the site while managing stormwater. The result: a sinuous riverbed dotted with small clusters of boulders and diverse plantings, guided by ecology and refined through iteration.

The project was completed in two phases. The first focused on the southeast corner of the garden and dry riverbed. The second focused on plantings west of the path and the turf area. Two subcontractors helped shape the swale, install the culvert, place boulders and set the natural stone steps. Our team prepared and planted the gardens. To protect the roots of the mature trees, the majority of the garden was prepared by hand, no small feat.

The garden is moving into its fifth season. It now requires little maintenance outside of tactical spring and fall cleanups. The garden shines in early spring, when the purple-blues of woodland phlox and crested iris carpet the riverbed, punctuated by groupings of Japanese forest grass. In the fall, the garden is speckled with the powdery blues of Aster 'Avondale' and the bright fruit of Red Sprite winterberry.

Brett Towle





2025 Excellence Award

Gavin Boyce-Ratliff - GBR | Landscape Design, LLC

Sterling Valley Farm



About this Project: Sterling Valley Farm is an ongoing, multi-phased project aiming to reconnect a historic farmhouse to its agrarian context. The house, built in 1784, was undergoing expansion and renovation when we were brought in to help tie the new architecture into the landscape. As the house and decks were being finished, the building no longer related to the surrounding woodland – and more pressingly, they left the job site with a steep access road of rip rap from the back of the house down to the stream.

The primary goal and request from clients were to connect outdoor spaces and doors behind the house and reclaim space that was no longer usable or navigable due to the steep slope. Being in a remote part of Morristown with an abundance of natural beauty at their doorstep, intentional use of local materials and plant material was also paramount.

Our response to the brief was to create a retained terrace that connected the east and west wings of the house to the new outdoor deck. We created the retaining walls out of fieldstone salvaged around the property. Some from old farm walls found in the pasture, and more from the woods below. Our subcontractor thoughtfully picked through piles to pick pieces that fit together well and maintained their aged, moss-covered look.

The terrace was built out of reclaimed granite curbing from Boston. This was a nod to the clients' primary home in Massachusetts – using

a material that was originally quarried in New England, had historical significance in their hometown, and still worked well with the Vermont field stone around it. Substantial drainage systems were designed and installed under the terrace to keep as much water moving downhill as possible.

While the planting plans for the phase 2 of the project out front are more complicated and diverse, we had two objectives on this back slope when it came to green space: First, even with newly retained hardscape and terraced space to gather, the slope below remained intense. So, it was imperative that the slopes were densely planted with quick-growing plants to get their roots down fast and hold the eroding slope.

Second, there was heavy invasive pressure coming up from the creek below in the form of Japanese Knotweed. Our solution to both concerns was Hayscented Fern Sod. Harvested sustainably in Northern New England, we installed sheets of fern sod around the terrace and along the steps down the slope to carpet any exposed soil. Within weeks the slope was blanketed in ferns and looked like it had been there for years. The result is a terrace, wall, and set of steps that look like they've always been there.

Gavin Boyce-Ratliff





2025 Honor Award

Nate Carr - Church Hill Landscapes, Inc.

Lakeside Landscape Renovation



About this Project: The clients, who've lived on the property part-time since 2017, desired beautiful functional gardens, lakeside enjoyment and protection of the natural environment. When addressing all the clients' goals for their landscape, it became clear that the project would be built in several phases. We started in 2019, and it was completed in 2022.

During the first phase, we were hired as the excavation contractor to support the builder's work on the house foundation and surrounding house site. During phase two, our work turned to the lakeside landscape. The owners were cognizant of the environmental impact that their lakeshore project could have on the lake and wanted the design to minimize erosion while also allowing lake access. Work along the lakeshore started with a limited scope design to address shoreline stabilization and planting, following the Lakeshore Protection Act Design Handbook for access, vegetation management and impervious surfaces.

After the lakeshore phase was complete, phase three began around the house, concurrent with the end of the home

renovation. The clients desired outdoor living areas that were beautiful, functional and while considering the impact on the natural environment.

The irregular bluestone entryway and patios were designed to be permeable with wide joints; a creative solution to add additional outdoor living space without adding more impervious surfaces.

With the same goals, we installed an outdoor dining area inside a lawn bordered by irregular bluestone interplanted with thyme.

The planting design took care to keep the beautiful views prominent. Gardens and a sod lawn were installed to perform environmental benefits taking into consideration habitat, erosion control and future maintenance requirements. Ornamental plantings were installed at the foundation of the house and above the grade changes, including native species and pollinator favorites. The project completed with phase four at the crest of the shoreline, planting low-growing species to handle near-constant wind, stabilize the shore, and frame the view.

Nate Carr





2025 Honor Award Gabriel Bushey Charlotte Pool Gathering Space



About this Project: We arrived to the site as the initial pool installation was being completed. Other contractors had already installed the footers for the pergola. From there we were responsible for all site work and stonework. We worked closely with the carpenters, pool company, and planting crew. We did not install the plant material. The goal of the project was to create an amazing outdoor space to entertain guests and their young children.

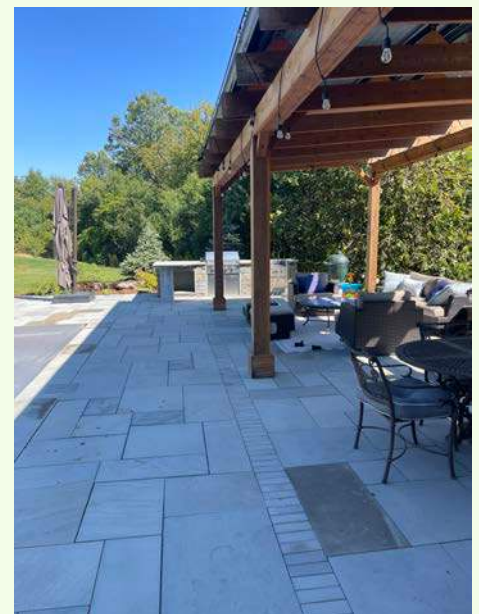
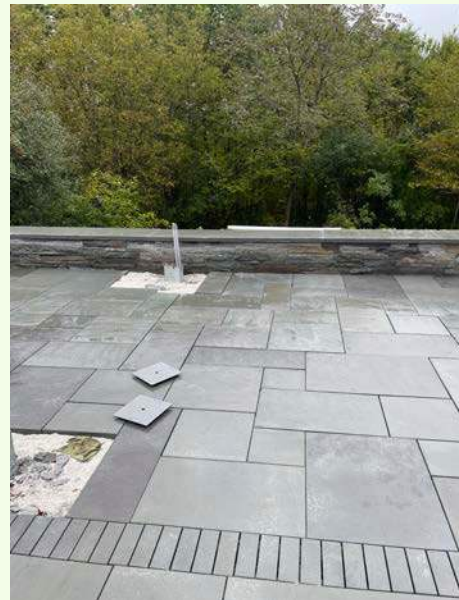
Highlights of the project included a stone grill island, stone seat walls, a large pool patio with shaded seating and pool house, large stone stairs, walkways and small patios

There were several challenges related to a project of this size and scope. Solar panels were later installed on the pergola which to work properly had to be angled towards the pool. This plus a seat wall meant surface drainage would not work. We had to install a trench drain but did not want to see plastic or metal at the surface. We instead added small custom pieces of bluestone on top of a drain. The footers were a challenge to work around and also to fit the bluestone.

For the grill island we wanted to create something unique. We used bluestone to create a storage space and framing for the grill and a very large burner for lobster cooking and maple syrup production. Outlets and a built-in umbrella holder were also a part of the island. Large equipment was needed not only for the size of material being moved but also to reach far enough to set some of the custom pieces.

We installed 8 ft wide steps at the deck which lead down to the pool area. In this space we worked with the carpenters to dig for footers and a large hot tub needed to be craned into place. Large boulders were artistically placed to retain soil and give visual appeal. We also installed small patios, walkways, and a new entry to the house from the driveway.

Gabriel Bushey





2025 Honor Award David Burton - Ginkgo Design, LLC Backyard Resort



About this Project: This client reached out after purchasing a pool for their new home and was not sure how to best fit it into her backyard. When I met with the client, she expressed her desire for a master plan that also addressed the awkward and insufficient driveway. It was the fall of 2022, and the house was still under construction, but she wanted to have the pool ready for family use by the following summer. She specifically mentioned the following items to incorporate in the backyard with the pool: fire pit, pool surround, dining area, outdoor shower and open lawn for a sports field. The client desired that the modern style of the home was reflected in the landscape and she requested that it felt like her own “backyard resort.” She was interested in landscape lighting to help achieve this look. She also requested increased screening from the neighbors.

The client was most concerned with preserving views of the Adirondacks from the second story, but she liked the idea of some spring blooming trees. She also wanted plantings to help the house feel in scale with the property. The client wanted easy access to the mudroom while keeping the front door as the focal point. We achieved this by using a wider front walk. The driveway was designed to allow for parking and easy access for guests.

In the backyard, the existing site conditions were fairly open with a couple of old apple trees in the back she wanted to save. We decided to design the pool to run parallel with the house to minimize the grade change. A short wall was designed to keep the water moving around the pool and toward the property lines where there were existing drainage swales. The wall had the functional dual purpose of being seat wall height. The sunbathing space was oriented on the west on the far side of the pool to maximize sun exposure. The dining area was close to the back sliding door and pool access. The step down allowed for access to all three different door heights with steppers to the guest room. The fire pit was placed on the same axis of the pool for a dramatic perspective.

Plantings were kept simple to minimize maintenance requirements and the use of hedges to keep with the modern style of the home. The plantings were positioned to break up the spaces into outdoor rooms and bring in color, texture and movement. The plants selected were mostly native species that are all hardy and easy to maintain. Large format pavers were chosen to maintain the modern aesthetic and minimize the joints between pavers.

David Burton





2025 Honor Award Caroline Dudek - Landshapes Backyard for an Active Family



About this Project: The clients contacted us in June 2021 about developing a design for the backyard of their home purchased the prior year. The traditional-style home, built in 2001, with minimal existing landscaping, needed renovation. They wanted a design geared towards their children's outdoor activities, with outdoor living spaces. Initially the main design feature was a swimming pool with built-in spa, and a large patio, but expanded to include a pavilion housing a fireplace and outdoor kitchen and renovating the existing upper terrace. Working with the clients, we developed a plan that reflected their design aesthetic of clean lines, encompassed all desired features and would create complementary plantings.

The site's challenging mix of grades required retaining walls to accommodate the pool, help define the living spaces, promote proper drainage, revitalize the upper terrace, and maintain open lawn space for sports. The clients ruled out traditional wall materials, looking for something unique, but functional, and liked our suggestion of reclaimed granite blocks salvaged from demolished old bridges. The addition of strategically placed bluestone steps optimizes flow between the various living areas.

Construction began in October 2022 with site work and retaining walls. The starting point was the swimming pool's precise elevation, which determined all other grades on site. We proceeded to install retaining walls and plantings, while we awaited the arrival of the

pool. Old plantings were overgrown and inappropriate for the shady location and new plantings were introduced. The revitalized terrace became a charming, quiet sitting area to observe the activity of the pool area.

Because the clients are fond of Ornamental Grasses and Hydrangeas, a mix of varieties flows between the upper terrace and pool area, providing continuity. Plantings were selected for their ornamental value and suitability to site conditions. Functional and attractive LED landscape lighting fixtures accent plantings and allow for enjoyment of the garden day and night.

The Latham 'Astoria' fiberglass pool in a granite-like finish, was installed with bluestone coping. The pool included state-of-the-art cleaning and water sanitizing features, a heater, and for safety and convenience an under-track automatic pool cover with an in-ground vault.

Finished in December 2022 the landscape reflects the homeowners' desire for a backyard that suits their energetic family. Whether using the hockey rink on a cold day and then sitting by the fireplace, or, playing on a hot day and then jumping into the pool, the finished landscape can be enjoyed all year round.

Caroline Dudek



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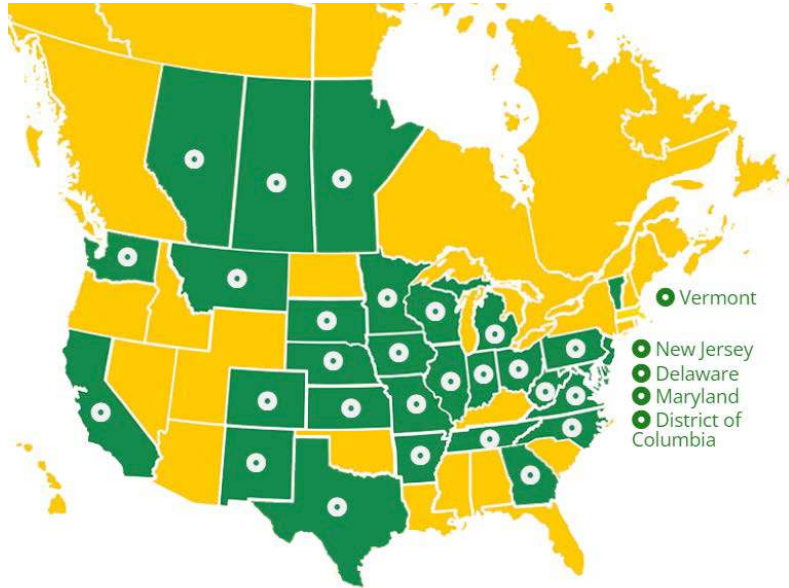


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New Technology Available for Pesticide Application in VT

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) has recently joined **FieldWatch Registries** to promote communication and collaboration between crop producers, beekeepers, and pesticide applicators. FieldWatch (www.fieldwatch.com) is a non-profit organization that services 27 other U.S. states, three Canadian provinces, and the District of Columbia.



Vermont is the first New England state to join the FieldWatch collaboration,



FieldWatch provides an online mapping platform (geographic information system (GIS)) that allows real time communication between farmers, beekeepers, and pesticide applicators in a secure environment with an easy-to-use mapping registry to identify and map the locations of apiaries and crop fields that pesticide applicators should avoid. The platform allows participants to determine the amount of information to be shared to pesticide applicators and/or the public.

VAAFM is partnering with the University of Vermont (UVM) Bee Lab to promote participation in the FieldWatch program. The UVM Bee Lab will serve in the role of Data Steward, assisting participants in enrolling in the system, providing technical support for communication through the system, and approving user's crops and apiary sites on the map.

Communication and cooperation are essential to successful farming and beekeeping in today's environment. Beekeepers rely on growers for locations to place apiaries, and growers benefit from the pollination services provided by beekeepers. Close coordination of activities helps ensure more successful outcomes for all

parties and promotes the overall success of Vermont agriculture.

The FieldWatch system will initially provide three services to Vermont agriculture: Fieldwatch – for pesticide applicators, Bee Watch – for Vermont beekeepers, and Driftwatch – for crop producers, both conventional and organic. All of these services are free to Vermont users and provide a way for participants to share information about field and apiary locations, crops planted and contact information. Participation is voluntary and there is

no cost to join and participate.

- Please visit <https://vt.driftwatch.org/> to learn more about Vermont FieldWatch.
- Please contact Sydney Miller of the Vermont Bee Lab at Mary.S.Miller@uvm.edu for information on how to participate.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 17, 2026 - 8am-4:30pm
New Hampshire Arborists Association Annual Meeting
 The Grappone Center
 Concord, NH
 Learn more [HERE](#).

March 18, 2026
Vermont Biodiversity Alliance Conservation Conversation
Shared Ground: Aligning Land Conservation, Biodiversity & Community Housing- on-line
 Learn more [HERE](#).

March 18-19, 2026
Northeast Hardscape EXPO
 Mohegan Sun
 Uncasville, CT
 Learn more [HERE](#).

March 24-25, 2026
8:45am - 12:45pm
UMASS Spring Kick-Off Landscape/Lawn Care Webinars
 Learn more [HERE](#).

March 26, 2026
VNLA Early Spring Tree & Shrub ID Trek
Cobble Creek Nursery
 991 Tyler Bridge Road
 Monkton, VT 05443
 Learn more [HERE](#).

April 8, 2026 - 11 am
VT Urban & Community Forestry Tree Nuisance Framework Training
 204 Orchard Road
 Bennington, VT
 Learn more [HERE](#).

May 9, 2026 - 9am-5pm
UMASS Extension New England Bee Identification Course /on-line & in-person
 Amherst, MA
 Learn more [HERE](#).

June 23-26, 2026
Snow & Ice Removal Symposium
 First Financial Center
 Cincinnati, OH
 Learn more [HERE](#).

July 23, 2026
Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association's Down to Earth Summer Conference w/ Michael Dirr
 Savage Farms, Inc.
 Deerfield, MA
 Learn more [HERE](#).

July 27-30, 2026
Perennial Plant Association National Symposium
 East Lansing, MI
 Learn more [HERE](#).

August 18-20, 2026
Garden Center Conference & Expo
 Loews Vanderbilt Hotel
 Nashville, TN
 Learn more [HERE](#).

August 27, 2026
VNLA Summer Meeting & Trade Show
 Shelburne Farms
 Shelburne, VT
 Details coming soon.

November 8-11, 2026
NALP's ELEVATE-The National Conference & Expo Landscape | Lawn Care | Design Build Install
 Tampa, FL
 Learn more [HERE](#).

THINK GREEN BE GREEN

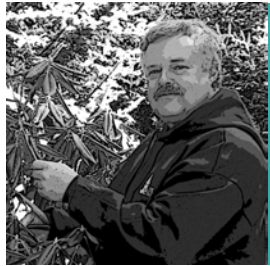


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LEONARD'S CLIPPINGS!

by Dr. Leonard Perry, UVM Horticulture Professor Emeritus

Winter, 2025/2026

Each semester I give a **course snapshot of the ALE (Agriculture, Landscape and Environment, formerly PSS department)**, reflecting focus and student interest. Here's what is offered this spring, with instructor and enrollment. There are several new courses, one of the most robust and diverse offerings I can recall, and several new names of instructors (such as staff, adjunct faculty from other areas, or grad students). The top three instructors by student numbers are White (224, 4 courses), Nikfarjam (178, one course), and Perry (170, 3 online courses, and yes I am still retired but teaching part time).



Dr. White was featured in the last issue of *The Dirt*. In case you haven't seen her name before, Michelle Nikfarjam (in photo) is a PhD student in Food Systems, part of the Institute for Agroecology, and is a Gund Graduate Fellow. "The Gund Institute for Environment is an interdisciplinary research accelerator based at the University of Vermont. We mobilize scholars and decision makers to tackle critical environmental challenges, and turn research into impact by partnering with government, business, and society."

Intro to Agroecology (Nikfarjam, 178), A Bug's Life (Sullivan, 40), Illustrating Botanicals (tbd, 13), Intro to Ecological Planning (White/Amore, 29), Coffee Ecologies and Livelihoods (Mendez, 18), Home Hops Growing (online, Perry, 41), Home Vegetable Growing (online, White, 103), Pollinators and Perennials (online, White, 23), Indoor Plants (online, Perry, 64), Garden Flowers (online, Perry, 65), Sustainable Vegetable Crops Production (Stievater, 21), Greenhouse Operations and Management (Allen, 15), Commercial Plant Propagation (Starrett, 28), Permaculture (online, White, 69), Soil Fertility and Conservation (Gorres, 28), Prof. Development Ag, Landscape, Environment (Gorres, 18), Agronomy (Tracy, 14), Pest Management for Gardens (online, Izzo, 24), Planting Design Studio (Acosta, 8), Agricultural Policy and Ethics (Bradshaw, 23), Diversified Farm Planning (Miller, 21), Biological Control (Nouri Aiin, 26), Ecological Landscape Design (Hurley/Amore, 14), Landscape Construction and Tech (Acosta, 16), Soil/Water Pollution/Bioremediation (Chen, 5), Crop Breeding (Tracy, 12), Pesticide Applicator Training (Kingsley-Richards, 10), Quantitative Thinking Life Sciences (Tracey, 9), and three high level courses in Agroecology.

Prior to the spring semester, during winter break, offered online were: Pollinators and Perennials (White, 44), Home Hops Growing (Perry, 24), Home Vegetable Growing (White, 47), Intro to Coffee Agroecology (Mendez, 23), Pest Management for Gardens (Izzo, 24).

ALE (PSS) Faculty Feature: Since most reading this may not know the above names with courses, even if you went to UVM in the past before these hires, I thought it might be of interest to get to know, and I have begun featuring, the names behind the ALE (former PSS) department.



Featured here is someone you may already know, as Ann Hazelrigg writes here in *The Dirt*, has spoken at many VNLA member meetings and flower shows, and has served as a valuable resource to many in our and other ag industries over the years. Ann earned her Ph.D in Plant & Soil Science, University of Vermont, in 2015; her M.S. in Pomology & Plant Pathology, Cornell University, in 1981; and her B.S. in Plant Pathology, Colorado State University, in 1977.

Ann is the director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, a statewide resource for commercial growers, Master Gardeners, home gardeners and the general public. The lab identifies disease, insect and weed samples, and makes recommendations for control based on integrated pest management (IPM) principles. She also oversees the VT Master Gardener Program, the UVM Pesticide Education and Safety Program and the Extension E-IPM program.

Educational programs and curricula include pest and disease biology and identification, pest management strategies using the latest IPM technologies and the safe use of pesticides to improve crop health, increase farm profitability and protect public and environmental health.





Pollinators, Plants and Habitat. In a recent study, published in the journal *Science* (Sept. 25, 2025), a team of international scientists analyzed a dataset of more than 178,000 individual insect pollinators to determine the minimum natural habitat on agricultural land that will allow insect pollinators to thrive. [my note: specifics may differ, but these same considerations apply to ornamental plants in our landscapes]

The study underscores the importance of both habitat quality and quantity. While hoverflies need a landscape made up of at least 6% natural features to thrive, and bumble bees need 18%, butterflies are much more sensitive, needing at least 37% natural features...

The *quantity* of habitat has an impact, but so does the *quality* of that habitat—a field margin planted with flowers that bloom throughout the year benefits a lot more pollinators than a field margin made up of a few non-flowering grasses...

“The timing of when floral resources are available for pollinators is especially important in agricultural landscapes, because often crop fields are monocultures—planted with a single crop species. Even if that crop blooms and provides a lot of resources to pollinators, typically it will only be in bloom for a couple of weeks a year, and that usually isn’t enough to

sustain a diverse and abundant set of pollinator species year-round.” [thanks to Jennifer, GreenTalks of Ball Horticultural for this summary; photo courtesy of another summary from AAAS at <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1099815>].



Cloud Dancer has been named the **Pantone Color of the Year for 2026**. The Pantone Color Institute is the global color authority that helps drive color trends in fashion, products, interior design and more. Its colors of the years (begun in 2000) receive wide publicity. Tap into this “free” publicity with plant offerings, combinations, or garden designs. Being an off-white (not pure white), Cloud Dancer can be reflected in so many choices of white flowering plants, even some variegated. You can see this white, and products showcasing it, on their website. You’ll also find much more on why they chose this “billowy white imbued with a feeling of serenity...An ethereal white hue, PANTONE 11-4201 Cloud Dancer serves as a symbol of calming influence in a frenetic society rediscovering the value of measured consideration and quiet reflection.” Said another way on their website, Cloud Dancer is “A lofty white whose aerated presence acts as a whisper of calm and peace in a noisy world.” (www.pantone.com)

As noted above, and you already know, there are SO many choices when it comes to white flowers. One new introduction (from Terra Nova Nurseries) is *Helleborus*

NORTH STAR™ ‘Crystalline’ (shown in photo, courtesy Terra Nova). Blooming in early spring (likely March/April in our region), it reaches about 12in. high for foliage (16-18in. with flowers), to 16-18in wide. It is listed hardy in zones 4-9. (www.terravanurseries.com) You can see more of their 20 white suggestions from floraldaily.com (www.floraldaily.com/article/9794088).



The arguably most prominent brand in our industry, Proven Winners, has their own listing of dozens of choices from annuals to perennials, shrubs to trees, even houseplants, to fit the 2026 Pantone color. (www.provenwinners.com/ideaboard/313292) An example is their selection from one of my favorite genera—the serviceberries. I enjoy their early spring color, and the attraction of their berries to birds and other wildlife (such as chipmunks and squirrels). Although we have cedar waxwings nearby, they only





Year of the
Azalea



Year of the
Ficus



Year of the
Hot Pepper



Year of the
Crocus



Year of the
Sedum



Year of the
Impatiens

show up to be seen closely when the berries are beginning to ripen. **Spring Glory® Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis* 'Sprizam')** is the Proven Winner selection, noted for its compact size—only 12ft. tall and 6-8ft. wide.

In last winter's *Dirt*, I mentioned the book by noted author Richard Louv, "**Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life.**" Just to refresh your memory, he is noted for promoting children interacting with nature, has written books on this, and co-founded the Children and Nature Network (www.childrenandnature.org) Based on his book above, this network has run an annual **Vitamin N Challenge**. As they describe on their website, "The Vitamin N Challenge can help – connecting you to ideas, inspiration and a community of people who are committed to spending quality time outdoors with the kids they care about. And, setting and committing to a goal will help you get more Vitamin N, whether you are working toward a day, a week, or months of more time outdoors."



I got wind of their newest twist from Jennifer White (GreenTalks, Ball Horticultural). "This year, C&NN launched a *winter edition of the challenge*, giving families a way to track and plan nature time even during the cold months.

Studying evergreen trees and birding (bird feeders) made their Top 10 list. But I'll also add that one of my very favorite doses of Vitamin N in the winter is the inside of any greenhouse/botanical garden." I'd second her last suggestion and, in addition to greenhouses within our industry, I'd give a shout out to our UVM Greenhouses (photo courtesy their site on **Instagram @uvmgreenhouse**). Check them out if on or near campus this winter. (www.uvm.edu/cals/uvm-greenhouse-facilities)

Whether you're a landscaper or retailer or other, with so many plant choices, where do you begin other than with your favorites? Various **plants of the year** by organizations would be a good starting point, or ones to at least be aware of as they receive wide publicity and many gardeners will be seeing and learning of them, maybe asking you about them.

In the last *Dirt* issue I mentioned the Perennial Plant of the Year for 2026, Blackhawks big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* 'Blackhawks'. I also mentioned the 2026 All-America Selections (AAS) perennial winner, the compact false sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides* 'Sole Giatto'.

Another organization, the **National Garden Bureau** names **Plants of the Year** (ngb.org/2026-year-of-plants). Originally just choosing an annual and vegetable, they now showcase a plant in six categories each year. "Plants are chosen because they are popular, easy-to-grow, widely adaptable, genetically diverse, and versatile." They are promoting 2026 as the Year of the Azalea for shrub, Year of the Ficus for houseplant, Year of the Hot Pepper for vegetable, Year of the Crocus for bulb, Year of the Sedum for perennial, and Year of the Impatiens for annual.



Then there is the well-established **All-America Selections program** (AAS, as noted above), (all-americaelections.org/)

founded in 1932 by W. Ray Hastings-- president of the Southern Seedsmen's Association of Atlanta, Georgia. "He proposed the idea of All-America Selections as a way for home gardeners to learn which new varieties [focus is flowers and vegetables, for many years just seed-grown ones] are truly improved." It is "the only national, non-profit plant trialing organization in North America...that tests new, never-before-sold varieties for the home gardener. After a full season of anonymous trialing by volunteer horticulture professionals, only the top garden performers are given the AAS Winner award designation for their superior performance."

New introductions are grown in several dozen industry, university, botanic, and similar gardens around the country, hence their tagline "tested nationally, proven locally... Every AAS Entry is grown next to one or two current varieties considered to be market standards. The judges use the comparisons as a "control" like in a science experiment...Varieties that perform best over all of North America become AAS National Winners. Entries that performed particularly well in certain regions are named AAS Regional Winners...AAS Winners are bred and produced without using genetic engineering, commonly referred to as genetic modification or GMO."

[For over 20 years while at UVM I had an AAS Display Garden, one of about 200 not trialing but rather displaying new introductions, winning their 2008 award for outstanding educational display garden. See the photo on the next page,



a flashback to this 2008 garden at Burlington's Waterfront Park.]

The 11 AAS winners for 2026

(which you can learn more about on the AAS website, these descriptions, and photos courtesy of AAS) are: Basil Treviso, Pole bean Majesty, Coreopsis SunGlobe, Dianthus Supra Cherry Picotee F1, Heliopsis Sole Giatto (only 20in. tall and wide), Kale Rubybor F1, Rudbeckia Claire Orange F1 (the world's first pollen-free F1 hybrid Rudbeckia), Sedum Spectacular (grown from seed, unlike most *spectabile* cultivars), Squash winter Butter Lamp F1, Tomato BadaBing! F1, and Zinnia Profusion Double White Improved (a Gold Medal AAS winner).

A side note relating to this rudbeckia (cultivar of *hirta*—a North American native): pollen-free flowers are bred either to last longer and keep blooming—without pollination the flower won't set seeds and complete its cycle—or to not shed pollen which can be messy for cut flowers. From the breeder, Takii Seed: "The absence of visible pollen in Rudbeckia Claire's flowers accentuate the visual impact of the plant as the center remains clean of pollen. Male sterility reduces the production of seeds within the flower. This can lead to more robust and visually appealing blooms, as the plant channels its resources toward petal development rather than seed formation."

While this plant won't provide pollen for pollinators such as bees, many species of rudbeckia—perhaps this cultivar included—are rich nectar sources which is equally beneficial to many, including butterflies. Rudbeckias are also an important source of food for monarchs during migration. "In a study conducted by the Xerces Society, researchers found that Rudbeckia was one of the top three most effective plants in attracting native bees. The study suggests that incorporating Rudbeckia into pollinator gardens can significantly enhance local pollinator diversity." (www.Beekeepercorner.com)



Above: AAS Display Garden at the Burlington Waterfront Park in 2008.

Below: AAS: zinnia, heliopsis, sedum winners.



Rudbeckia hirta 'Claire'.



THE LAB

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Four-Legged Pests in the Landscape

by Ann Hazelrigg, Phd, UVM Extension

Luckily, there are not many infectious plant diseases that we contend with over the winter. However, we do have to be vigilant and protect vulnerable landscape trees, shrubs and perennials from four legged pests. Girdling, gnawing and bark stripping can all be problems in woody ornamentals (and some perennials) during winters in Vermont. If the damage is minor, the plant can usually repair itself and recover, but if the damage encircles the trunk, shoots or crown, the plant will succumb. Rabbits and voles are responsible for girdling and gnawing damage on trees and shrubs. There are various clues to tell you which animal is causing the problem. Rabbits make sharp-angled cuts and neatly prune the ends of branches. They can also gnaw the bark off young trees or shrubs, especially those with thin, smooth bark. Usually there are tell-tale round, brown feces near the damaged plant if rabbits are involved. The damage usually noticed after the snow melts in the spring but be aware the damage in the plant can be quite high if snow levels were high enabling the rabbits to have a better vantage point. The



(L) Eastern cottontail. Lewis Gorman US Fish and Wildlife.
(R) Clean angled cut by rabbit. University of Wisconsin Horticulture.



(L) Rabbit girdling damage. Northern Gardener, Minnesota State Horticultural Society.
(R) Rabbit damage girdling small tree above the tree guard. A. Hazelrigg.

Eastern cottontail rabbit is common throughout the state and is active during the day and night throughout the year. When food is scarce in winter, cottontails eat woody plant stems and buds of blackberry, raspberry, sumac, apple, crabapple, euonymus, viburnums, yews, junipers and cherry, among others. The best preventive is to protect your vulnerable plants, especially young trees, in the fall with hardware cloth or tree guards that span at least 18 inches high.

Voles are about the size and shape of a mouse and have small ears and a short tail. They typically feed while protected under the snow, so their damage tends to be at the base of the plant. Evidence of their

presence is often seen in early spring after the snow melts with a series of trails on the surface of the lawn. Several of the Russian sage (*Salvia yangii*) plants in my garden are damaged every year by voles. If the damage is not too extensive, new shoots will replace the damaged ones and the plants look fine by early summer. Junipers and yews are especially vulnerable since they provide food AND cover for



voles in the winter. Above ground dieback symptoms of girdling damage typically appear in the spring. Follow the damaged branches to the crown and examine the roots and low branches for evidence of vole feeding.

Gnaw marks from voles are irregular and at various angles, unlike rabbits which tend to cut everything off with clean, almost 45-degree cuts. Voles often take advantage of the protective cover from weed barrier fabric which fosters populations in nurseries. Mowing between rows of trees may help keep damage down but typically the best management strategy in nurseries and orchards is baiting and trapping.



(L) Above ground dieback to winter vole damage. John Ball.

(R) Girdling by voles at the base of the juniper. John Ball.

If you have a plant problem, please reach out to the UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic, 63 Carrigan Drive, Burlington or through email at ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu.

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News from the VT Agency of Agriculture, Foods & Markets: *Protecting Vermont's Hemlocks*

By: Emilie Inoue, Plant Industry Division, VAAFM

Hemlocks are an important part of Vermont's forests and a valued species in the nursery and landscaping industry. They support wildlife habitat, stabilize soils, help maintain healthy streams, and provide shade as a long lived conifer. Protecting hemlock health benefits both Vermont's environment and the businesses that work with these trees.

Vermont continues to uphold a quarantine for hemlock woolly adelgid, which regulates the importation of hemlock nursery stock into the state. Nurseries ordering hemlocks from out of state are encouraged to [review the quarantine](#) requirements and ensure all conditions are met before shipments arrive.

During inspections last year, Plant Health inspectors identified an additional concern. Some hemlocks imported into Vermont were free of hemlock woolly adelgid but were found to carry [elongate hemlock scale](#), an introduced pest that can weaken trees and pose a serious risk if it becomes more widely established. Currently, elongate hemlock scale has been identified only in [isolated pockets within Vermont](#), making prevention of further spread especially important.

Under Vermont law, nursery stock offered for sale is expected to be sound and healthy, and stock that is



diseased or infested with injurious pests cannot be sold. When infested stock is identified during inspection, the Agency may require that affected plants be placed on stop sale, treated, or removed from sale to prevent further spread. As part of meeting these requirements, nursery stock transported into Vermont for sale, distribution, or installation should be accompanied by a valid certificate of inspection or other documentation accepted by the Secretary, indicating that the stock is believed to be free of injurious pests and plant diseases.

Because of the environmental risk posed by elongate hemlock scale, the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Plant Health Section asks

nurseries and landscape companies to take extra care to prevent the introduction of this pest into Vermont. To protect Vermont's forests, imported hemlock nursery stock is required to arrive free of elongate hemlock scale, in addition to existing requirements for hemlock woolly adelgid. If any life stage of elongate hemlock scale is detected during inspection, the shipment cannot remain in Vermont and must be returned or destroyed.

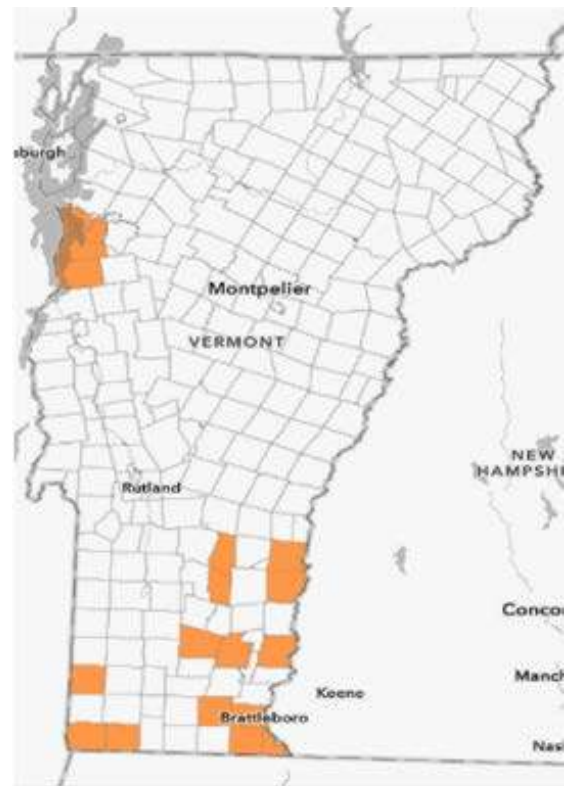
This context is especially important following Vermont's restrictions on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on ornamental plants, which took effect July 1, 2025. While neonicotinoid products are restricted for use within



Vermont, hemlocks treated with neonicotinoids outside the state may still be imported, provided they meet all applicable quarantine and inspection requirements. Treatments for elongate hemlock scale and hemlock woolly adelgid differ, and treatment for one does not necessarily address the other. For this reason, confirming which pest a treatment is intended to manage can help avoid confusion when sourcing or accepting hemlock nursery stock.

Nurseries importing hemlocks are encouraged to communicate directly with suppliers to confirm that effective treatments for elongate hemlock scale have been applied prior to shipment. Clear communication and shared care across the supply chain are key to keeping Vermont's hemlocks and forests healthy.

View the VT Forest Invasive Pest Status Map [HERE](#).



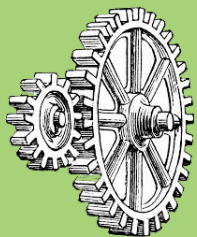
VT EHS Distribution map
ANR-FPR

A close-up photograph of a flowering plant with white petals and prominent red star-shaped markings in the center of each flower. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

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OHIO QUARANTINE FOR SPOTTED LANTERNFLY



Ohio has issued a statewide quarantine for spotted lanternfly effective February 17, 2026. As a result, all nursery stock being shipped out of Ohio must have a compliance agreement, be inspected and permitted. Products shipped to non-regulated areas must have nursery stock inspected, and each delivery must have a certificate that confirms the products are SLF free. You can read more about this quarantine [HERE](#).

Learn more about SLF and its distribution in Vermont [HERE](#).



If you missed Katie Dubow at the VNLA Winter Meeting you can DOWNLOAD THE 2026 GARDEN TRENDS REPORT [HERE](#)!

2024 USDA Census of Horticultural Specialties Reports \$18.3 Billion in Sales

Read the Greenhouse Grower article [HERE](#).

You can access the full USDA report [HERE](#).



U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Are you a plant geek? Check out the U.S. National Arboretum Plant Introduction/Releases list. Over its 90 year history, the Arboretum has released over 650 different woody and herbaceous plants. Many of these plants have been award winners. The Arboretum has also developed fact sheets on individual plants. You can peruse the list [HERE](#).



Strengthening Vermont's Ecosystems Through Collaboration: The VBA Story

By: Mandy Van Dellen

Vermont's forests, grasslands, waterways, and working lands support extraordinary ecological diversity- from pollinators and songbirds to native plants and the complex web of organisms that keep our ecosystems healthy. But increasing pressures from development, invasive species, climate change, and habitat fragmentation are testing these systems in new ways.

Recognizing that no single organization can meet these challenges alone, a diverse coalition has formed the Vermont Biodiversity Alliance (VBA), a growing network committed to conserving and restoring the state's ecological richness through collaboration and shared expertise.

Who We Are

The VBA brings together conservation groups, state agencies, researchers, private landowner organizations, forestry and land management professionals, and community partners. Our mission is to elevate biodiversity stewardship across all sectors- public, private, and nonprofit- and ensure Vermonters have access to the information, tools, and support needed to care for the natural communities around them.

Supporting Your Work

Many Vermont landowners and land professionals are seeking practical guidance on integrating native species, supporting pollinators, reducing ecological impacts, and designing resilient landscapes. The VBA helps meet these needs by coordinating education, sharing best practices, and connecting people with partner organizations that specialize in forest stewardship, wildlife conservation, climate adaptation, and ecological landscaping.

One example of these connections is **Biodiversity Builders**, an initiative developed by Ashley Robinson of VNLA and Lisa Sausville of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife. This initiative was sparked by conversations, working groups and gatherings organized by the VBA to create the platform for such collaboration.

Biodiversity Builders is a hands-on learning series designed to introduce the importance of native plants, supporting habitat and increasing biodiversity into our landscapes. The 3-part series is geared to residents and community members focused on Addison County with the goal to create a model to inspire others to follow.



Channeling the efforts of Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park, Biodiversity Builders goes a step further, providing a workbook, tips, tools and resources for anyone interested in supporting wildlife, building biodiversity across their

community. Participants are encouraged to join all 3 sessions as they follow the seasons, build off one another, and provide an integrative approach to landscape practices. From design to implementation, management and beyond, this series will challenge traditional norms & practices, inspire creativity, encourage experimentation and celebrate the willingness to bring more nature within reach.

Ashley & Lisa bring their shared interest in community engagement, passion for protecting our environment and experience in their respective disciplines to this educational opportunity. A chance to learn from one another, engage with our neighbors and recognize we are more impactful collectively than alone.

Whether you're advising clients on plant selection, managing a nursery operation, or designing residential or commercial properties, the choices you make about plant material, site preparation, and maintenance practices directly shape habitat quality across Vermont's broader landscape.

Contributing to Vermont's Conservation Vision

The VBA supports Vermont's progress toward the state's "30x30" vision- conserving 30 percent of lands and waters by 2030 while maintaining working landscapes and community values. This isn't just about setting land aside; it's about enhancing biodiversity on every acre, from backyard plantings to private woodlots to municipal and commercial properties.

As landscape and nursery professionals, your expertise is essential to this effort. The VBA serves as a hub for connecting your on-the-ground work with the latest science, resources, and a community of practitioners working toward the same goals.

Learn More

For more information about the Vermont Biodiversity Alliance, visit www.vermontbiodiversityalliance.org or contact vermontbiodiversityalliance@gmail.com.





THE PLANT LOUNGE

wiry stems, hairy leaves and bodacious blooms. . .

Acer pensylvanicum 'Erythrocladum' - Snakebark Maple, Moosewood

by Mark Dwyer, Landscape Prescriptions by MD

I continue to explore more diverse woody plant options for winter interest in the garden and certainly ornamental bark and stems become part of that equation. I've always lived in regions with four distinctive seasons and I appreciate the pop of bright color in the winter from the colorful stems of dogwoods (*Cornus* sp.) and other woodies. One of my favorite small trees for winter appeal is the 'Erythrocladum' snakebark maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) which gets increasingly more impactful and brilliant in the winter with coral red stems and bark. While the straight species is a durable understory woody with ornamental merit, the variety 'Erythrocladum' turns up the temperature in the winter garden as the temperature drops.

Native to a wide range of the northeastern quarter of the United States and southeastern Canada, our only native, snakebark maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) prefers moist, well-drained soil and some degree of shade, particularly in the afternoon. Hardy in USDA zones 3-9, this species is also tolerant of humidity. The green and white streaked stems are quite showy. The variety 'Erythrocladum' features the typical green and white-striped stems in the warmer season but a colorful and very notable transformation occurs in the cooler months.

I planted a trio of 'Erythrocladum' specimens over 15 years ago in a local public garden and the two that have survived continue as focal points during



the coldest months of the year with hot red stems that are increasingly revealed after the leaves drop in autumn. In winter, the first and second-year stems are the most vivid with a pure, coral-red contribution. Older stems and trunks become more of a brick-red to reddish-brown in time so it's the juvenile growth that contributes the most pizzazz.

Ideally located as an understory specimen or in areas with some afternoon shade, this variety will slowly grow between 10' and 20' in height and width. The fall color of this tree ranges from a brilliant chartreuse to a buttery yellow and is consistently showy, even in shadier locations. This variety is rare in cultivation due to difficulty in propagation (grafting). Unfortunately, this species is not resistant to deer or rabbit browsing and some insect and disease problems (Verticillium wilt) should be noted. However, as a winter showpiece, the 'Erythrocladum' snakebark maple has few competitors for attention and when well-placed, can be a fiery beacon of warm color during those winter months.

Why Grow *Acer pensylvanicum* 'Erythrocladum'?

- Choice, native, understory option for the shadier garden
- Bright red stems for winter interest
- Excellent yellow fall color
- Effective focal point in winter



Specifics

Name: *Acer pensylvanicum* 'Erythrocladum'

Common Name: snakebark maple, moosewood

Description: This small maple features golden fall color but is best known for young stems and branches transitioning to a brilliant red in the cooler months.

Hardiness: USDA z 3-8

In the Landscape

Consider this specimen in the deciduous understory as a singular winter focal point or repeat in locations framed by window views from primary vantage points.



About the Author:

MARK DWYER is currently the Garden Manager for the Edgerton (WI) Hospital Healing Garden after 21 years as Director of Horticulture at Rotary Botanical Gardens (Janesville, WI). He also operates Landscape Prescriptions by MD, a landscape design and consultation business. mcdwyer@zoho.com
Visit: www.landscapeprescriptionsmd.com.



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The Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association mission is to support and strengthen the horticulture industry of Vermont by creating greater awareness of the benefits of landscaping and promoting the professional services and products of our members.

visit us at www.vnlavt.org