

THE DIRT

Spring Issue 2026, Volume 52, Issue 1



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**Dear Fellow VNLA Members,
Colleagues, & Friends,**



As I write this the weeping cherry in my front yard is just starting to open its spring blooms, peonies are just starting to grow, and temps are finally headed in the right direction. This time of year comes with so much work for all of us but also comes with renewed energy for all of us and our landscapes.

Each year I find myself experiencing all of the spring stress that comes with servicing our customers, planning projects, onboarding new employees, and all of the other work that comes with spring landscaping season in Vermont. Thankfully spring also comes with hope. The grass is green, bulbs are blooming, and the sun is out, at least some of the time. This spring has some extra hope in the air. Personally, my brother is getting married next week. Weddings are always a reason to hope for great things in the future. The VNLA as an organization also has good reason to have hope for great things in the future. We have been interviewing candidates to replace Kristina. Although no one will ever truly replace her, we have been impressed with the slate of applicants we have been speaking to. We will certainly update everyone as the process develops.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you as the season kicks off. Good luck to you all this year.

All my best

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabe Bushey". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Gabe Bushey, VNLA President.



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**Cover Photo Credit: Kristina
MacKulin.**

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CONGRATULATIONS MELANIE!

2026 VNLA Board Meeting Dates

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.
Contact the VNLA office to confirm.

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THE BUZZ

the low down on what's up!

The 2026 VNLA Summer Meeting & Twilight Gathering Schedule

by Kristina MacKulin

The VNLA Program Committee has spent the winter months planning both the Summer Meeting & Trade Show program schedule as well as our spring/summer twilight gathering tour schedule.

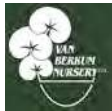
We will be returning to the **Shelburne Farms Coach Barn** for our **Summer Meeting & Trade Show on August 27, 2026**. The Coach Barn has been under renovation these past few years and we are excited to be back there! The transformation of the space is quite incredible.



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Our **keynote speaker, Jason Rathe**, hails from Minneapolis, MN and is the founder and majority owner of **Field Outdoor Spaces**, a residential design/build landscape company. In 2017 Jason realized that exactly zero of their seventeen crew leads and crew members thought they would still be at the company in five-years. Doing a quick survey of the employees, their responses were consistent and clear (1) everyone wanted full-year employment (2) they didn't think a person could stay healthy landscaping for their whole career and (3) they wanted to be able to buy a house.

Over the last nine years Field Outdoor Spaces has confronted each of these issues. They created a winter remodeling division called Uplift by Field, invested in an extensive body-health program and raised salaries. In 2026, Field will not hire a single person and almost all of

their employees plan on staying for the foreseeable future. In addition, Jason sold shares of the company to 6 individuals and kicked-off a long-term employee ownership transition.

Jason is excited for the opportunity to talk about the details of this journey as well as their internal systems of Open Book Management, their scorecard and scoreboard system and their experience implementing EOS. Jason wholeheartedly believes the landscaping career is in a golden era, offering exciting opportunities to create jobs that are empowering, safe,

healthy and provide wages on which employees can build a fulfilled life. Field Outdoor Spaces is the recent winner of a Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association Platinum Vision Award for their Field Body Health Program, which is designed to address health concerns unique to landscaping and build a long term workforce.

The afternoon concurrent sessions will include 1.5+ hour tour led by Jess Rubin of Mycoevolve of a long-term project at Shelburne Farms. This socio-ecological reconciliation project aimed to mitigate phosphorus pollution, increase pollinator habitat, facilitate Abenaki land access, and foster local ecoliteracy. Hear about the 7 year pilot and three year next-level project investigating mycorrhizal fungi's role in expediting plant's phosphorus uptake and restored polyculture habitat's biodiversity. Jess



will discuss site history, methodology, data findings, socio-ecological reconciliation principles, community collaborations, and bioregional context within the larger restoration, landscaping, and regenerative agriculture movements.

A second concurrent session will be a presentation by Emily May from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (www.xerces.org) entitled Pollinator-Friendly Landscapes: Turning Good Plant Choices into Better Outcomes. More home gardeners around Vermont are seeking plants that support bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects than ever. How can nurseries and landscape professionals meet the moment by providing valuable habitat plants while minimizing the risks of pesticides to pollinators? This talk will highlight high-value pollinator plants for Vermont, share recent research on pesticides in nursery plants, and explore how pesticide use in managed landscapes can shape the value of pollinator-attractive plantings. Emily will cover practical strategies to improve outcomes for pollinators at every step, from nursery production through landscape design and maintenance.

The Committee continues to plan for the last session of the day and it goes without saying we will hold our annual summer meeting auction once again. Registration will be live June 1st. We hope you can join us for the day.

The first Spring/Summer Twilight Gathering of the season will be a tour at Lincoln Hill Botanical Gardens led by owner Paul Wiczoreck in Hinesburg, VT on June 4, 2026. In particular his stunning collection of Rhododendrons and Azaleas should be in full bloom! You can learn more and RSVP [HERE](#).

On July 9th, 2026 Ed Burke will lead us on a garden tour at Rocky Dale Gardens in Bristol and on July 16, 2026 Ann Hazelrigg from the UVM Diagnostic Lab will lead a tour of the Lab and on the campus grounds to examine pests and diseases in the landscape. Samples of your own pests/diseases are welcome. You will be hearing from us soon on the tour schedule for August, September and October!



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VNLA Sponsors the MNLA DOWN TO EARTH Summer Conference!

by Kristina MacKulin

The Vermont Nursery and Landscape Association has officially signed on as an event sponsor of the **Down to Earth Summer Conference & Trade Show**, hosted by the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscape Association on **July 23, 2026** at VNLA member Savage Farms, Deerfield, MA.

This year's event brings together green industry professionals from across the region for a full day of education, networking, and hands-on learning. Attendees will hear from renowned horticulturist Michael Dirr, along with a lineup of expert educators covering timely and practical topics for today's landscape and nursery professionals.

Keynote speaker **Michael A. Dirr, is the author of seven books**, including *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture and Propagation and Uses*, a widely used and best-selling reference text. A Mercer scholar, Dirr is considered one of the green industry's most celebrated plant experts. A professor of horticulture at the University of Georgia, his teaching, lectures, seminars, garden study tours and plant introduction programs have contributed to industry awareness.

The Summer Conference will be a nostalgic journey through decades of landscaping and nursery innovation,



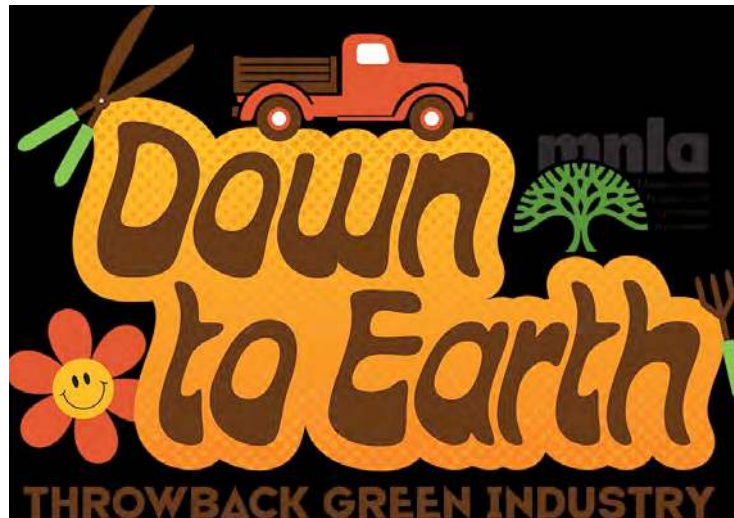
style, and culture—from the '60s to the early 2000s.

“Down to Earth” also offers valuable opportunities to earn pesticide and professional certification CEUs, making it not only an engaging summer event, but a meaningful investment in workforce development.

Through this partnership, VNLA members are invited to take advantage of MNLA's early registration **Member Rate of just \$75** when registering on or before **June 30**.

More than a conference, “Down to Earth” is an opportunity for business owners and managers to recognize, empower, and thank their teams—providing access to professional development, peer networking, and a well-earned day of learning and fun in a collaborative outdoor setting.

MNLA looks forward to welcoming VNLA members to Deerfield this July for a truly “down to earth” experience that strengthens both businesses and the broader green industry community. Learn more and register [HERE](#).



Plant breeder Michael Dirr, with 86 plant patents, including the Endless Summer® brands.



The VNLA Plastic Pot Recycling Program

by Kristina MacKulin

The VNLA Plastic Pot Recycling Program is in its 5th year, thanks to Prides Corner Farms, our VNLA member business drop-off locations, and Jordan Plastics. These companies have all made a commitment to help recycle our industry waste. We highly encourage VNLA members to participate in this program and be a part of this recycling effort. The drop off locations are:



- **Evergreen Gardens | Waterbury Center**
- **Glebe Mountain Gardens & Landscapes | Londonderry**
- **Greenhaven Gardens & Nursery | New Haven**
- **Horsford Gardens & Nursery | Charlotte**

The drop off schedule for this season is:

- **July 13 – 17, 2026**
- **July 20 – 24, 2026**
- **August 10- 14, 2026**
- **August 17 – 21, 2026**
- **September 14 – 18, 2026**
- **September 21 – 25, 2026**

What Can be Recycled:

All containers/plastic pots of any size (1 gal, 2, gal, etc) with the designation/symbol #2 and #5 plastics can be recycled. Pots must be separated into groups: #2 plastics in one group and #5 plastics in another group when bringing them to the VNLA collection sites. PLEASE PLACE YOUR POTS IN THE CORRECT LOCATION. ALL POTS MUST be empty with no tags or trash. They do not have to be cleaned. Members can also make their own pallets and deliver “pallets” to these collection sites.

You can read about the program [HERE](#). We should all be proud of our recycling efforts as an industry so mark your calendars for the drop off dates!! Start saving your pots now!

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VT Blooms Initiative | VNLA Volunteer Projects

by Kristina MacKulin

The VNLA launched the **Vermont Blooms Initiative (VBI)** in the **Fall of 2020**. This initiative was the brainstorm of the board of directors during the first year COVID arrived. We were unable to produce the Vermont Flower Show and this became a way for our members to connect with the public.



The VBI is a planting program dedicated to enhancing Vermonters health by improving and beautifying our civic landscapes. This all-volunteer endeavor, funded by donations from our VNLA members and associates, seeks to improve/enhance public outdoor spaces across our towns throughout Vermont. These projects are intended to be relatively simple and easy to implement. Projects could include planting trees, planting a pollinator garden, a pruning project, etc. Locations for these projects could include a town center, a boys & girls club site, a community garden, local school, or public library to name a few. You can watch a Channel 3 WCAX interview about the launch of this program [HERE](#).



To date a total of nine projects have been spearheaded and completed by VNLA members and with the help of the VNLA Volunteer Project Outreach Committee. Here is the list of those projects:



We encourage our members to participate in this program! Most of the projects occur later in the season/early Fall. Contact the office if you have a project you would like to propose.

To date a total of nine projects have been spearheaded and completed by VNLA members and with the help of the VNLA Volunteer Project Outreach Committee. Here is the list of those projects:

- Allen Brook Elementary School, Williston
- City of Vergennes Street Planting
- CP Smith Elementary School, Burlington
- Jeffersonville Family Housing at Mann's Meadow, Jeffersonville
- North Branch Nature Center, Montpelier
- Platt Memorial Library, Shoreham
- Ronald McDonald House, Burlington
- Town of Shoreham Pavilion, Shoreham
- Vergennes Elementary School, Vergennes



The second volunteer planting initiative the VNLA has been involved with is working with Habitat for Humanity. Since 2018, we have completed five full landscape installation projects with both Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity (GMHH) and Habitat for Humanity of Addison County. We continue to foster this relationship with Habitat and are looking forward to working together on future projects, thanks to the generosity of VNLA members and associates who have participated in this volunteer effort. We are looking forward to what comes next for this planting season!


Top left photo: The volunteer group at The Ronald McDonald House, 2022; top right: the CP Elementary planting in 2023; center: the volunteer group at North Branch Nature Center, 2025; center top: GMHH project in 2019 and the volunteer planting project for Addison County Habitat for Humanity in 2023.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 8, 2026 - Friday
3rd Annual Introduced Species
Collaborative Gathering
111 State Street
Montpelier, VT
Register: [HERE](#).

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

May 28, 2026 -8:30 am - 3:45 pm
- VNLA Sponsored!
VT Urban & Community
Forestry Conference
Vermont State University
Randolph, VT
Register [HERE](#).

June 4, 2026 - 6 - 8 pm
VNLA Twilight Tour @
Lincoln Hill Botanical Garden
2800 Lincoln Hill Road
Hinesburg, VT 05461
Learn more [HERE](#).

June 23-26, 2026
Snow & Ice Removal
Symposium
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July 9, 2026
VNLA Summer Twilight Tour @
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July 11-14, 2026
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July 16, 2026
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July 23, 2026 - VNLA Event
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Conference w/Michael Dirr
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Deerfield, MA
Learn more [HERE](#).

July 27-30, 2026
Perennial Plant Association
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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 Coach Barn
Shelburne, VT
Learn more [HERE](#).

November 8-11, 2026
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February 18, 2027
VNLA Winter Meeting &
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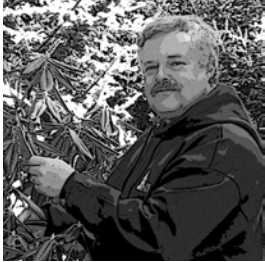


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LEONARD'S CLIPPINGS!

by Dr. Leonard Perry, UVM Horticulture Professor Emeritus

Spring, 2026

Each semester I give a **course snapshot of the PSS department**, reflecting focus and student interest. Here's what is listed as of this writing for this summer's sessions: Home and Garden Horticulture (online, Starrett), Garden Flowers (online, Perry), Home Vegetable Growing (online, White), Permaculture (online, White), Fundamentals of Soil Science (lecture/lab, Gorres), Introduction to Beekeeping (online, Alger) and Hands-on Beekeeping (lecture/lab, Alger), Pest Management for Gardeners (online, Izzo), Plant-based Healing Medicine (online, Elmer), Diversified Farm Operations (lab, Bradshaw), Agroforestry (lecture, Mendez).

In ALE (formerly PSS) Department and Campus news:

- In these tight times, it is always nice to see a new position. Over the past year ALE has advertised a tenure-track **Assistant Professor position in Soil Ecology**. Recently this Spring several applicants have been interviewed and given seminars. Hopefully in the next issue here there will be an announcement of a new faculty member.
- A new **Master of Science in Agroecology** has officially been launched– the first graduate program of its kind in the United States. Beginning in the fall of 2026, this fully online program for early and mid-career professionals combines rigorous academic study and practical application of theory in the real world.

“Built by the UVM ALE department and the UVM Institute for Agroecology (IFA), this program grew out of

collaboration and conversations with farmers navigating climate uncertainty, organizers building food sovereignty movements, policymakers grappling with inequity, and students asking for education that matches the urgency of this moment. Again and again, one theme emerged - transforming food systems needs more than technical fixes; it requires new ways of learning, leading, and working together. “

You can learn more about this program on their website. (<https://www.uvm.edu/cals/ale/program/agroecology-ms>)



- The **UVM Ag Club** has 10 garden beds at Catamount Farm (HREC), where they grow a variety of flowers for gorgeous bouquets that they sell as a club fundraiser. You can buy them at the @onefarmersmarket this summer. (Photo courtesy Facebook: Ava with the flats of flowers she seeded for @agricultureclubuvm)
- **Faculty Feature:** Since most reading this may not know the above faculty 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 the names behind the ALE (former PSS) department. Last issue, you may recall, featured Ann Hazelrigg—a name known to many in our industry through her oversight of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic.



Featured here is Research Assistant Professor, **Dr. Cheryl Frank Sullivan**—another name you may know through her outreach and work with growers and pest management.

Dr. Sullivan got her degrees at UVM-- in 2021 a PhD in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences in Entomology; in 2012 an M.S. in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, in Biological Control/Integrated Pest Management; and in 2003 a B.S. in the School of Natural Resources, in Environmental Science/Conservation Biology.

Her expertise is in Entomology, Integrated Pest Management, Biological Control, Entomopathogenic Fungi, High Tunnel and Greenhouse Pest Management, Vector Ecology and Management (Ticks).

“I’m an Entomologist that specializes in the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) of arthropod pests. I’m particularly interested in surveillance strategies for early pest detection and biological controls (predators, parasites and pathogens). My research focuses on the development of biopesticides using entomopathogenic fungi and conservation of natural enemies of



agricultural pests, especially in greenhouses and high tunnels. I also specialize in tick ecology and management across a diversity of landscape settings.”

With ticks on the “up-tick” in Vermont (my pun attempt, not hers), you may want to visit her website link (<https://site.uvm.edu/vt-tic/>).

Each issue I like to mention new flowers, in particular winners of various awards and recognition you should at least be aware of, if not grow or use. Among these for 2026 were the All-America selections flowers (all-americaelections.org/), and the 2026 Perennial Plant Association winner-- Blackhawks big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii* ‘Blackhawks’ (perennialplantoftheyear.com/the-plants/).

Plant societies often chose yearly winners, one of the most popular genera being **hostas**.

“Since 1996 the American Hosta Growers Association has chosen to award and promote a Hosta of the Year. With the termination of the AHGA Hosta of the Year program in 2025, the American Hosta Society Board decided to continue the Hosta of the Year program with new guidelines for selection of the AHS Hosta of the Year. The winner of the AHS Hosta of the Year uses the winner of the Benedict Garden Performance Award as the Hosta of the Year for the following year. If the Benedict Garden Performance Award winner has previously been an AHGA Hosta of the Year selection, a previous recent Benedict Garden Performance Award winner is selected as the next AHS Hosta of the Year. The new criteria used by AHS are not for marketing purposes but are meant to guide gardeners to hostas that have demonstrated excellent garden performance.” (www.americanhostasociety.org)

The Hosta of the Year Award 2026, has been awarded to *Hosta* ‘Halcyon’.



“*Hosta Halcyon* is part of the ‘*Tardiana*’ group, and was first registered in 1961, by Eric Smith, and noted by British Hosta Society in 1988. Eric Smith (1917-1986) was a plantsman and hosta hybridiser from Dorset (UK). In 1961, he took advantage *Hosta sieboldiana* ‘*Elegans*’ which flowered unusually late in the season so he could use its pollen to fertilize the flowers of an *Hosta* ‘*Tardiflora*’. The untimely original cross created a whole series of smaller, very colourful blue-green plants called the “*Tardiana*” group. Eric did not register any of the 34 *Tardiana* Hostas but Paul Aden, Alex Summers, Peter Ruh, and the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society did so starting in the 1970s. In addition to the word *Blue*, many of the cultivars start with the words, *Dorset* or *Hadspen*.”

(If you see these names on several popular hostas, now you know the backstory. Photo and information here courtesy www.rewelahostas.com/ from Yorkshire, UK).

Hosta ‘*Halcyon*’ grows to about 2ft. high and slightly less wide. Leaves are about 4in. long and about 3in. wide.

“*Hosta Halcyon* is known as one of the best blue-leaved medium sized Hostas on the market. It is a very neat deep, chalky blue foliage last well in the autumn. It is a vigorous grower and very reliable. Slug resistant and sun tolerant.”

Then, with the termination of the original AHS hosta of the year award, gardeners may be confused by the new kid in the garden, the **Proven Winners® Hosta of the Year** which, for 2026, is *Hosta*

SHADOWLAND® ‘Hope Springs Eternal’. From Walters Gardens (which owns the Shadowland trademark, www.waltersgardens.com for more info, and courtesy of for this information and photo): ‘*Hope Springs Eternal*’ is an appropriate name for a hosta that will bring joy year after year. Heart-shaped, blue horizontal leaves have a crisp creamy white margin and form a formal habit. Its most notable feature are the incredible ruffling on the leaves that undulate all the way to the pointed tips. Near white flowers in midsummer.” Growing about 2ft. high and wide, flowering scapes reach about 4ft. It is listed for part to full shade.



“The Proven Winners National Plant of the Year program selects plants for their exceptional performance. These plants have been chosen for their proven excellence and ability to be used successfully nationwide by growers and gardeners alike. The *Hosta of the Year* is a division of this program highlighting on of the most popular genus from the Proven Winners Perennial brand.”

I’ve chosen this issue to focus more on hostas, as they are by far the biggest selling perennial in the national production statistics. (The following facts excerpted from a nice summary by Paul Pilon in the Ball Perennial Pulse e-news.)

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA/NASS) just published the 2024 Census of Horticultural Specialties. The Census is only conducted every five years, and it includes reports from producers with \$10,000 or more in sales of horticultural specialties in 2024.”



(And yes that is the date, it takes a while to compile and publish all the data.)

Compared to the previous 5 years (2019), there were 14% more growers (12,497), with 23% more sales (\$6.795 billion). For bedding plants, there was a 7% increase in grower numbers (8,739), with a 27% increase in sales (\$4.027 billion). There were slightly less growers of perennials (5,068) than in 2019, yet perennial sales were up 47% (\$1.36 billion).

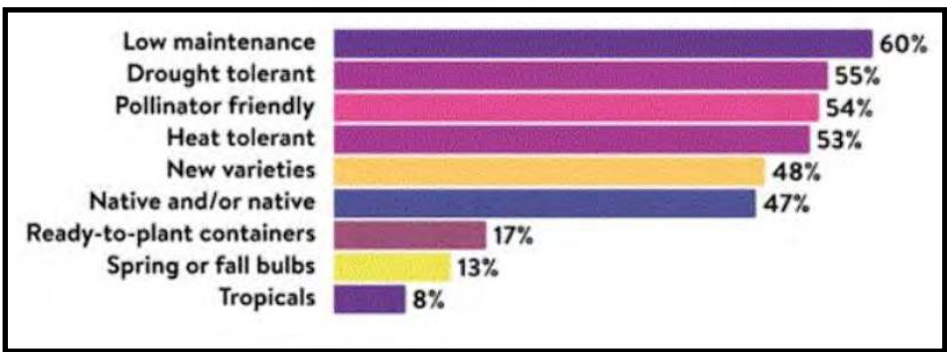
Then, for me the fun stats, the **top selling perennials**. With these national stats, how do your local sales match up? This past winter, **Proven Winners released results of a national retail survey** from 7,500 home gardener participants. (thanks to Jennifer, Ball GreenTalks e-news for this info.) When asked “What type of plants would you like to see more of in your area? Predictably, “low maintenance” topped the list at 60%, but right behind that were

drought-tolerant plants at 55% and pollinator-friendly plants at 54%. Meanwhile 47% of respondents said they wanted more natives or nativars. Ready-to-plant containers? Only 17% wanted more of these.” (https://www.provenwinners.com/2025_retail_survey)


How do these number match those of your customers and clients?

**2024 Census of Horticultural Specialties
Top 10 Herbaceous Perennials by Sales \$**


1	Hosta	\$	73,696,000.00
2	Ferns (Hardy/Garden)	\$	48,711,000.00
3	Lavender	\$	43,133,000.00
4	Dianthus	\$	27,055,000.00
5	Salvia	\$	26,767,000.00
6	Hemerocallis	\$	25,953,000.00
7	Echinacea	\$	24,979,000.00
8	Phlox	\$	22,683,000.00
9	Sedum	\$	21,983,000.00
10	Heuchera	\$	20,228,000.00



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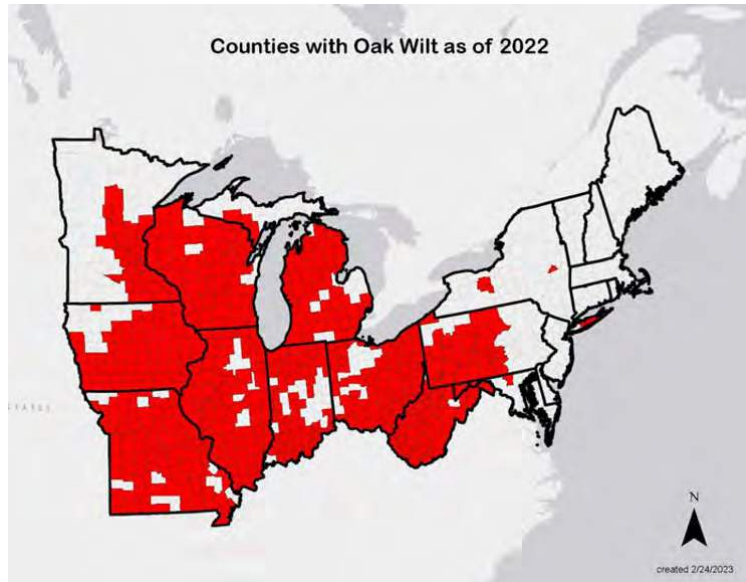


Oak Wilt Disease

by Ann Hazelrigg, Phd, UVM Extension

Oak wilt is a vascular wilt disease caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum* (formerly *Ceratocystis fagacearum*). Like Dutch Elm disease, the fungus plugs the tree's xylem and impedes the flow of water and nutrients upwards, resulting in defoliation and death. All oaks are susceptible to the fungus, but the disease spreads more rapidly in trees in the red oak group (pin oak, northern red oak, willow oak, black oak, etc.), often killing trees within a matter of weeks. Infected trees in the white oak (white oak, swamp white oak, etc.) group may show some limb dieback but death may take several years. White oaks tend to limit infections through the production of tyloses produced by the tree as a defense mechanism. The closest outbreaks of the disease to Vermont occurred in the Albany, NY area but were effectively eradicated. The disease is widespread in Long Island, NY and throughout the midwest.

The symptoms in red oaks typically start in the tops or outer portions of the tree and spread downward. Leaves wilt and begin to turn brown from the tips and leaf edges toward the midrib and base followed by defoliation. There may be discolored sapwood under the bark of branches with wilted leaves. The disease in white oaks show the same discoloration



Above: Counties in the eastern US with oak wilt as of 2022. USDA Forest Service Image-Eastern Region State, Private and Tribal Forestry.

Below: Red oak foliar symptoms showing tip and edge dieback caused by oak wilt pathogen. Photo: PennState Extension



of the sapwood and the same leaf symptoms but the foliar symptoms tend to be more scattered, and the trees may live for several years.

The oak wilt pathogen spreads above ground mainly through sap beetle (Nitidulid) vectors and below ground through root grafts. Root grafts can be very common, especially if the same species of red oaks are within 50 feet of each other. Sporulating mats develop on infected trees between the sapwood and bark that attract sap beetles. The mats, sometimes called “pressure pads” are variable in size and are usually produced in late fall or early spring on the trunk or large branches of the tree. The beetles move the sticky spores produced in the mats on dead red oaks to healthy trees to start new infections. The mats are not produced in white oaks or on living trees.

The fungus can survive on the above-ground parts of the infected tree for up to a year after the tree has died. However, the pathogen can remain viable longer in the roots of the tree. The fungus can also be spread artificially through the movement of

infected firewood or nursery stock.



Management of the disease has been successful through eradication efforts in limited infections, as in Albany. Where the disease is present, pruning oaks is not recommended, especially during the time the beetles are most active (April-July depending on location) since the beetles are often attracted to wounds from storm damage or pruning. No pruning anytime during the growing season is a more cautious approach if the disease has been identified in the area. Elimination and disposal of infected trees in addition to severing root grafts around infected trees can provide a buffer zone for



Sporulating pressure pad produced by the oak wilt pathogen.
Photo: Bill Cook, Michigan State University
https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/persistence_of_oak_wilt.

healthy trees. Avoiding the movement of any oak firewood is critical to limiting the spread of the pathogen in infected wood.

As always, if you are seeing an issue in a tree or shrub, you can always send a picture to ann.hazelrigg@uvm.edu or send a sample to the UVM Plant Diagnostic Clinic at <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/plant-diagnostic-clinic>.

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News from the VT Agency of Agriculture, Foods & Markets: *Filling the Canvas*

By: Emilie Inoue, Plant Industry Division, VAAFM

Every time humans build something - a home, a road, a parking lot, a school - a blank canvas is created. We clear, grade, and pave. And then, inevitably, we look at what has been made and feel the pull to fill it. To soften it. To make it feel like somewhere. That impulse is one of the most human things there is.

Nursery and landscape professionals are the people who answer that impulse. This industry holds the paint.

The landscape Vermont wakes up to every spring is not accidental. It is a canvas filled continuously - shaped by our history, every sourcing decision, every planting plan, every species offered and every one left off the list. Every tree planted in a new subdivision, every shrub along a commercial corridor, every perennial in someone's first garden - these are brushstrokes on a living painting that stretches across the whole state. The art that shows up on Vermont's landscape is the accumulated result of countless decisions made at every scale, season after season, by the professionals who grow, recommend, and plant.

That is a real opportunity. And it carries with it a real responsibility.

Choosing the right paint colors is the single most important step in the whole process.

The decision about which species to grow and sell - made long before a plant reaches a customer, often in the routine work of selecting what to order or propagate each year - is where the greatest opportunity for impact lives. What gets planted shapes what can live here. A plant that looks native, and may even be marketed as one, may not function ecologically the way a regionally native species does. It may not support the insects, birds, or pollinators that evolved alongside Vermont's flora. And some plants, once established, can cause serious harm to Vermont's forests, wetlands, and natural communities - moving through the same supply chains that serve every nursery in the region. Species selection is a decision with reach well beyond the sale itself. The cumulative effect of those decisions, made by professionals working at every scale across the state, is significant.

Vermont's State Botanist recently offered a webinar exploring how botanists and horticulturists can work together to restore habitat and maintain Vermont's ecological integrity - including practical guidance on how thoughtful plant selection and stewardship practices can support healthy native plant systems at a landscape scale. The recording is available here: [Restoring Abundance and Conserving Rarity: Helping Vermont's Native Plants Thrive.](#)

Vermont's current plant species regulation, the [Noxious Weed Rule](#), has been in place since 2012. A modernized regulation - the Regulated Introduced Plant Species Quarantine, or RIPS Quarantine - is currently moving through the rule-making process. Until it is complete, the Noxious Weed Rule remains the governing regulation: the [list of plant species prohibited or restricted from sale](#) does not change in the interim.

When the RIPS Quarantine becomes effective, it will bring meaningful improvements: clearer language; a defined scientific process for adding species to the regulated list without reopening the rule each time; and incorporate a watch list for early tracking of species of concern before they reach the threshold of regulation. The advisory body that will review species under the new rule is also being renamed - from the "Vermont Invasive and Exotic Plant Advisory Committee" to the Regulated Introduced Plant Species Advisory Group - a change that better reflects the nature of the work. These updates accurately reflect a transparent way of describing what is being managed: plant species introduced through human activity, regulated through a rigorous and collaborative scientific process. Once the new rule is in effect, the Agency will work with state partners and the regulated community to explain what has changed and what it means in practice.

Both the watch list and the regulated species quarantine list will be publicly available on the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets website. The quarantine list under the new rule will carry over directly from the list currently managed under the Noxious Weed Rule - the same species, the same foundation - but managed through a structure that allows for timely updates as the advisory group makes recommendations and as new information emerges. That flexibility is the point. The goal is a list that stays current and useful, not one that lags behind because the process for updating it is too cumbersome to use.



The regulated list tells you what is prohibited or restricted from sale. That's where the law draws the line. The watch list operates differently: it's an early window into species of concern, creating space to make informed sourcing decisions ahead of a mandate. The underlying belief is simple: growers and landscapers want to make good choices. The barrier, more often than not, is having the right information at the right time. Knowing which species are on Vermont's regulated plant list - and which are being watched - is an important part of getting the colors right.

Not everything that arrives on a shipment was ordered. As spring shipments begin to arrive, please inspect incoming stock carefully. Pests and diseases move through the same supply chains as the plants themselves, and they do not announce their presence. Through the [Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey](#) program, the Plant Health Section conducts early detection surveys each year at nurseries, greenhouses, Christmas tree farms, and across Vermont's forests and high-risk introduction sites — work that has been ongoing for more than two decades. This year's surveys will focus on [introduced pests of national and state concern](#).

All growers and landscapers can be part of this early detection network - this season, we are specifically asking the industry to watch for [spotted lanternfly](#), [hemlock woolly adelgid](#), [elongate hemlock scale](#), and [beech leaf disease](#), along with any other pest or disease concerns that arise upon delivery. Early detection at the point of arrival is one of the most effective tools available, and this industry is positioned to use it. Please reach out to us directly if you have any concerns or questions: AGR.PlantHealth@vermont.gov or visit <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/public-health-agricultural-resource-management-division/plant-health-and-pest-management>.

The canvas is never finished - it changes with every season, every shipment, every choice about what to grow. This industry is not a bystander to Vermont's ecological story - it is among the most active contributors to it, and this work is stronger for the collaboration between growers, landscapers, and the people working to understand and conserve Vermont's ecology.

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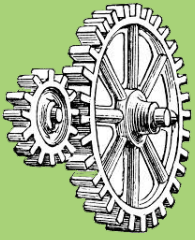
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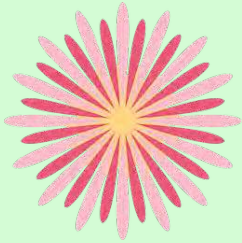


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Learn more about the winners and the awards [HERE](#).



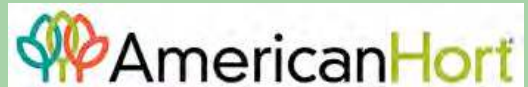
Garden Media Group announces the 7th Annual Women in Horticulture Week - May 24-30, 2026. Read all about it [HERE](#)

(Photo courtesy of Garden Media Group).

METHODS OF DISPOSING OF INVASIVE PLANT MATERIAL



As of July 2016, yard and leaf debris—including material from invasive plant control—is banned from Vermont landfills. Learn more at VT Invasives [HERE](#).



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NutriHarvest®, USDA BioPreferred® Program Champion, Turns Recovered Nutrients into Plant Growth While Advancing Soil Health and Water Protection

By: Dr. Anju Krivov

Around National Biobased Products Day in early March, NutriHarvest®, recognized as a USDA BioPreferred® Program Champion, highlighted a resource recovery approach that connects plant nutrition, soil health, and water quality. NutriHarvest® shared field results showing that fertilizers produced through resource recovery can support crop performance while helping reduce excess nutrients remaining in the soil late in the growing season.

Why this matters for landscape and nursery professionals.

For growers, landscapers, and nursery operators, nutrient loss is more than an agricultural issue. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can move beyond plant systems and contribute to harmful algal blooms, oxygen-depleted waters, and broader watershed stress. State and federal agencies have responded with nutrient reduction targets in sensitive watersheds nationwide, including places familiar to many in the green industry, such as Lake Champlain, the Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes, and California's Clear Lake. NOAA also reports that the Northern Gulf hypoxic zone has averaged about 4,755 square miles over the past five years.

For VNLA members, this makes nutrient efficiency increasingly important not only for plant performance, but also for water stewardship. Whether the setting is a nursery block, a managed landscape, a home garden, or a specialty crop field, the challenge is similar: provide enough nutrition for strong growth while minimizing what is left behind after peak uptake.

What NutriHarvest® is.

NutriHarvest® is an OMRI Listed line of organic fertilizers and biologicals produced through advanced resource recovery biotechnology. The process captures nutrients from waste source streams and converts them into stable, plant-available fertilizers. In practical terms, that means nutrients that might otherwise remain in liquid effluent or contribute to



downstream loading are instead recovered and reused in a form designed for plant production.

NutriHarvest® represents both a plant nutrition strategy and a water protection strategy. For growers and landscape managers, the appeal is straightforward: fertilizers designed to provide steadier nutrient availability, support plant vigor, and reduce excess nutrient buildup in soils later in the season.

That message also resonates at the gardener level. As one home grower, Cheryl D., put it, "NutriHarvest fertilizer application was a no brainer. Our carrots were gorgeous, and our sweet potatoes grew so big."

What the field results suggest.

Across multiple field evaluations, including independent trials led by a leading University Extension program, NutriHarvest® fertilizers showed consistent performance across both commodity and specialty crop systems.

In corn, NutriHarvest® treatments increased yield compared with untreated controls and a popular commercial organic fertilizer while maintaining performance comparable to conventional nitrogen programs under equivalent nutrient rates. In tomatoes and other specialty crops, yield increases were observed across multiple comparisons, including organic and conventional benchmarks, with especially strong results in later harvest cycles.

Beyond yield, the nutrient efficiency story may be especially relevant to horticulture and landscape professionals. Soil monitoring showed lower early-season soil nitrate levels compared with synthetic fertilizers, as well as reduced late-season residual nitrogen in vegetable systems. That matters because nutrients left in the soil after peak crop uptake are more vulnerable to runoff and leaching, particularly in sensitive watersheds.



Water protection starts upstream.

One of the more distinctive aspects of the NutriHarvest® story is that water protection begins not only in the field, but also in manufacturing. Resource recovery captures nutrients from waste source streams before they are lost to runoff, then converts them into stable fertilizer products. In other words, the water-quality benefit is not limited to what happens after application. It also comes from intercepting nutrients earlier in the cycle and putting them back to work productively.

Combined with lower residual nitrogen in field use, this creates a two-part narrative that may be of interest to landscape and nursery professionals working in areas where nutrient management expectations are becoming more visible.

BioPreferred® recognition and the broader bioeconomy.

The USDA BioPreferred® Program adds another layer to the story. Led by USDA Rural Development, the program promotes products derived from renewable biological resources and works to expand markets for biobased alternatives. USDA has described that mission this way:

“USDA’s BioPreferred® Program helps expand markets for biobased products by increasing awareness and encouraging their use across the economy. We are pleased to recognize NutriHarvest®, a BioPreferred® Program Champion, for its commitment to developing biobased products that contribute to the growth of the U.S. bioeconomy,” said Vernell P. Thompson, Procurement Analyst, USDA BioPreferred® Program, USDA Rural Development.

For Vermont and the broader Northeast, that recognition speaks to several trends at once: stronger domestic supply chains, reduced reliance on fossil-derived inputs, and greater interest in circular approaches to nutrients and materials. Those themes are increasingly relevant to green industry professionals as clients, regulators, and communities look more closely at the relationship between landscape performance and environmental responsibility.

Relevance for VNLA members.

Although much of the reported data comes from agricultural systems, the implications extend to nursery production, managed landscapes, and horticultural settings. Steadier nutrient release can support plant uptake and vigor. Lower residual nutrients can help reduce movement into nearby waterways. And resource recovery offers a useful example of how waste-stream management, plant nutrition, and water stewardship can be brought together in one system.

For VNLA members, that may be the biggest takeaway. The industry is being asked more often to balance aesthetics, performance, soil health, and environmental protection at the same time.

Products and practices that connect those goals, rather than treating them separately, are likely to become more relevant in the years ahead. NutriHarvest® is expanding distribution across farm, horticulture, and specialty crop channels. More information is available at www.nutriharvest.com, and other inquiries can be directed to info@nutriharvest.com.

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Parthenium integrifolium - Wild Quinine, American Feverfew

by Mark Dwyer, Landscape Prescriptions by MD

A portion of my public garden work included managing a small prairie restoration and I recall being aware of wild quinine (*Parthenium integrifolium*) being one of the constituents. I enjoyed the white summer flowers from afar but have had the recent luxury of observing this hardy, clump-forming native perennial up close. I've enjoyed getting to know this plant and am surprised it hasn't become more mainstream even in the traditional perennial garden. It's long period of bloom, solid stature, pollinator potential and bold garden presence are remarkable.



This Asteraceae member, native to the eastern and midwestern United States, is best in full sun and will reach up to 48" in height with ample moisture. Adaptable to a wide range of soils, this heat tolerant, long-lived perennial is normally found scattered in disturbed areas of prairie and glades. The fragrant, toothed, "sandpapery" foliage is quite bold at the base and becomes smaller ascending the strong stems. The lengthy bloom period is from June until September and features a flat-topped floral structure (corymb) with densely-crowded, whitish, woolly flowers. These interesting flowers (excellent in arrangements) are quite "cauliflower or button-like" in their appearance and attract a wide range of native bees, wasps, flies and beetles. The upright flower clusters, bunched



loosely together, have a coarse, "baby's breath-like" appearance and additionally, the winter inflorescences are attractive.

Once established, wild quinine is challenging to move due to a taproot. Moist stratification of seed is the primary germination method. This bold perennial has no serious insect or disease problems and is both deer and rabbit resistant. The leaves have a history of medicinal use, particularly in teas to reduce fevers. This plant contains parthenolide which is a chemical valued for anti-inflammatory properties. Interestingly, the common name, wild quinine, relates to the use of this plant during WWI as a quinine substitute to treat malaria. It was substituted for the bark of the South American, Cinchona tree, due to shortages at the time. This beautiful plant deserves more attention!

Why Grow *Parthenium integrifolium*?

- Robust, native species adapted to many garden situations
- Four months of bloom with white, clustered flowers
- Attracts a wide range of native pollinators

Specifics

Name: *Parthenium integrifolium*

Common Name: wild quinine, American feverfew



Description: This bold, native perennial blooms all summer with flat-topped clusters of white, “cauliflower-like” flowers that are also excellent for pollinators.

Hardiness: USDA zones 4-8

In the Landscape

Consider using this mid-sized perennial in native plant gardens, sunny mixed borders and in situations where bold foliage and a splash of white flowers will be effective.

This article is reprinted with permission from Nursery Management Magazine.



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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