



# Friends of the Hort Farm

## 2024 – A Year of Changes

The Hort Farm's new pavilion that Dr. Terry Bradshaw has been planning for years is almost finished. On the corner opposite the Blasberg Building, it will be used as an outdoor classroom in place of the tents. At the same time, a new high-speed internet line was installed requiring the removal of old favorite crabapples on the corner and a disruption to the Cary Garden which required repairing the ground and eventually returning bluestones to their place.

A couple more things—we are signed up for the 2025 Flower Show March 7-9, and plans for our exhibit will start soon. Also, we have decided to hold a retreat in early 2025 to discuss how the Friends of the Hort Farm can grow, what we want to achieve in the next few years, and much more. We'll keep you updated.

And as always, a big thank you to all our volunteers. We couldn't keep up with our collections without you



In addition, the pond road which was a major path to the rhododendrons, conifers and Branch Out Burlington, and which a storm destroyed several years ago, is now re-built as a walking path. This will give a welcome, shorter access to that area of the farm.

and your selfless help and energy. We are so grateful!

Kitty and Hayley  
Co-presidents

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### Autumn 2024

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Friends of the Horticultural Farm  
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# Events and Programs 2024 recap

## Winter

We started the year with “Growing and Enjoying Lilacs” presented by Dr. Mark DeBard from the International Lilac Society, with a comprehensive delivery on lilacs--types, colors, forms, growing and pruning. If you wanted to know all about lilacs, Dr. DeBard delivered. As a member, you can view the [video here](#).

Our two annual pruning programs are designed for new and experienced gardeners to learn pruning techniques to use on your own trees and shrubs.



Pruning Crabapples —this is Tom Shea from an earlier event

Crabapple pruning by Coyote Biercevicz, retired biologist and long-time Hort Farm presenter, and basic pruning for trees and shrubs with V.J.Comai, the City of Burlington Arborist, demonstrated these techniques and how they add aesthetic value and overall health to the landscape.

## Spring

In April, Lindsey Ruhl, with her background in plant and soil science, gave us a thorough program on knowing your soil before you plant—what soil is, fertilizing the soil not the plant, and what the color of your soil means---preparing gardeners for spring planting.

The May lilac tour is a Hort Farm favorite, and curator Kitty Werner guided visitors through the care of lilacs, from their needs, varieties, colors, bloom time and more, answering a variety of questions on lilacs. Visitors enjoyed not only the beauty of these blooms but also their fragrance.

At our Bloom Time Festival in May, UVM speakers Margaret Skinner and Somi Ghasemzadeh spoke on



Soil 101 event

“Saffron” and “Deer Tick Management”, followed by “Indigenous and Naturalized Plants” from Bob B. Little Tree. Guest Exhibitors—Branch Out Burlington, NO-FA-VT, the Urban and Community Forest Program—joined us, and Master Gardeners offered free soil testing for lead. Hort Farm curators answered questions about growing and caring for your plants, Kids Activities included a Discovery Walk, building terrariums and fairy houses. And Plein Air Artists, tractor rides, and the Swing Peepers supplied fun and music.

## Summer

Again this year in early June, Paul Wiczorek, our rhododendron curator, took visitors on a walk through our beautiful rhododendron collection, discussing the various varieties, how to grow and care for them, locations and soil conditions, while enjoying the beautiful display of blooms.

Also in June, board member Mark Twery (below) walked visitors through the Hort Farm to identify invasive plant species, ways to address the problems they create, and the use of mechanical and chemical management techniques.





Nicko Rubin (above) of East Hill Tree Farm gave a talk about “Growing Fruit Trees in Vermont”. He shared his knowledge on variety selection, soil and site considerations, planting, and long-term care.

June ended with Sarah Salatino of Full Circle Gardens offering ways to rethink how we prepare for hot, dry summers and days of pouring rain in her program on “Water-Wise Perennials and Gardening”. She followed the next week with “Attracting Beneficial Insects to your Gardens” for ways to control common garden insect pests and to attract beneficial insects to your garden.

The annual plant sale was held three days after Vermont was hit the second time with an overwhelming flood. Despite the devastation to the many roads throughout Vermont, our nurseries contributed greatly to our sale, and our volunteers found their ways around closed roads to make the pick-ups of plants

## Fall to Winter

Recently, on a beautiful, sunny October morning, curator Paul Wiczoreck took a group of people on a tour around the farm to talk about conifers, explaining what group of plants are included in this category, their varieties, colors, sizes, shapes, texture, and how their diverse architectural forms enhance the garden landscape.

Our last program will be “Create a Winter Centerpiece”. This is one of our favorite programs and usually sold out. The Friends supply the greens and cuttings to make a beautiful holiday arrangement. Attendees bring their own container and creative ideas. Landscape designer Charlotte Albers will lead the class on December 7, 9-11, at the Hort Farm.

The educational programs of the FHF are selected to bring the best information possible to our audiences so they can take the knowledge and apply it to their own gardens and plant projects.

## A Message To Our Members

Every year, the Friends of the Hort Farm care for plants we call “the collections”. This is part of our mission—to care for and protect the collections and educate our members and the general public on horticulture and gardening.

For a couple of hours on spring and fall weekends, we recruit volunteers to our “workdays” to work in our collections—pull weeds, prune branches, cut back vines and attack the invasive bittersweet that ravages many of the plants. There are 108 lilacs and at least 35 rhododendrons desperate for help, not to mention the conifer collection being revitalized.

Unfortunately, the collections need more help than we can give them without more volunteer help. And this is just part of the FHF mission.

Your board meets monthly to go over all the other areas we are working on. Here is a list of where we need help.

- suggestions for the annual program calendar
- volunteer facilitators at programs given at the Hort Farm
- writing newsletters
- two event chairs to work on the Bloom Time Festival together
- picking up plants, contacting nurseries, etc., for the annual plant sale
- listing our events in Front Porch Forum
- work on the planned Miner Memorial Garden
- putting together our exhibit for the March 2025 Flower Show.

In addition to volunteering for the above, you can see that we also need more members on the board to help us make these decisions.

As a member of the FHF, you are part of the organization. Because your board cannot do all this alone, we are asking you to Become An Active Member and be part of the process. If you have the time and interest to help your organization, please contact Kitty Werner, [kwerner@wcvr.com](mailto:kwerner@wcvr.com), or Hayley Hornus, [Hayley.hornus@gmail.com](mailto:Hayley.hornus@gmail.com), or talk to us at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, Nov. 9.

## Become an Active Member



## The Future Miner Memorial Garden

The Don and Stephanie Miner Memorial Garden (aka MMG) has gotten off to a slow start.

The photo above shows the location of the future Miner Memorial garden, and the pavilion to be dedicated to Dr. Samuel Wiggans (see next page). The pavilion will be incorporated into the garden design.

After the death of Stephanie Miner in 2023, a committee was formed to create a garden at the Hort Farm to the memory of Stephanie and Don Miner, two of the founders of the Friends of the Hort Farm.

The committee is composed of Stephanie's friends Nancy Simson and Linda Elrick, as well as people who worked with and for her in her gardens and members of FHF. Suggestions came from everyone on the committee as to what we wanted included among them Stephanie's favorite flowers, pathways, children's area, benches, and plenty of pollinator plants.

The black plastic in the photo was the first effort to get the ground ready for the garden.

Judith Irven, landscape designer and Vermont Certified Horticulturist, offered her expertise to design the space.

On March 28th, Judith met with



Judith and Brian

Kitty Werner and Brian Vaughn, Hort Farm Operations Coordinator, to see what room there was for what and where. Measurements were taken, ideas offered, and the plan just kept growing. Judith is a fount of ideas we'd never thought of and Brian is quite happy to have less to mow.

May 4th saw Mark Twery and Alex Furst, an Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteer, measure out the garden layout.

A plant list has been created, Master Gardeners have selected it as a work project, and plans are in place for tilling to begin in spring.

With luck, good weather and willing volunteers, we will have a new Miner Memorial Garden in 2025.

Alex and Mark measuring out the future garden





## The Wiggans Memorial Pavilion

In honor of Dr. Samuel Wiggans, the Friends of the Hort Farm have dedicated a pavilion located between the lilacs to the west and the future Miner Memorial Garden to the east to Dr. Wiggans.

From Dr. Norman Pellett's history notes, published in 1998, we learned that Samuel Wiggans became chairman of the Horticulture Department in 1963. Dr. Pellett's notes:

He received his M.S. (1947) and Ph.D. (1951) degrees at the University of Wisconsin in plant breeding and in plant physiology, respectively. He was on the Iowa State University faculty for seven years and Oklahoma State University faculty for five years before coming to the University of Vermont.

When the Horticulture Department was merged with the Agronomy Department in 1964, he was appointed chairman of the new Plant and Soil Science Department. Wiggans developed a keen interest in the Hort. Farm as evidenced by his daily presence and his many projects there. His family built a home just outside the northwest corner of the Farm in 1967.

Wiggans maintained trials of hundreds of garden chrysanthemum cultivars for many years. Each year he planted new cultivars and took data on flowering time



Prof. Samuel Wiggans examining fruit set on young apple trees. Circa 1970

and wintering survival.

He established collections of daylilies, peonies and irises. He established an All-American Selections annual garden to display new flower cultivars for the public. Twice yearly he organized an open house at the Farm for the public on Sunday afternoons in May when the crabapples and lilacs were in flower and in September when the chrysanthemums were in flower. Hundreds of people attended these events. After taking winter injury data on chrysanthemums, Wiggans opened the Farm in May each year for the public to dig plants which had survived the winter. Each year he started with new chrysanthemum plantings adding new kinds to test their adaptation.

Many organizations used the

Hort. Farm for professional meetings, picnics, and tours at the invitation of Wiggans. He obtained funding for putting in the chain-link fences that provide security from deer and unauthorized persons. In addition to his achievements at the Hort. Farm, Wiggans established a highly popular undergraduate course at the University called Home and Garden Horticulture. He coordinated lectures by Plant and Soil Science faculty with some guest lecturers from outside the University. In the mid-1970's, more than 300 students enrolled in the course. He also taught a graduate course in Plant Research Techniques. Wiggans along with P. S. Ingram published *Climate of Burlington Vermont* in 1968 (Vt. Agr. Exp. Sta. MP 53). Wiggans left the University in 1980 to take a position with the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington D.C. In 1996, he was named a Fellow by the American Society for Horticultural Science for his contributions.

We invite you to come sit in the pavilion and enjoy the view—lilacs to one side and our future Miner Memorial garden on the other.



## Pollinator Garden Update

Many thanks to the volunteers who came for October's clean-up. We can't do this without you!

As plans for the Miner Garden progress, with hopeful installation next year, many of these plants will be moved over to the new garden.

As future plans (possibly very future plans) for the

Hort Farm advance, much of this area will be more classrooms.

As it stands, a new pavilion is being built at the corner of land where the little wooden pavilion once stood. That pavilion is now located in the far northwest corner of the farm for a teaching and pollinator garden.



## Rhododendron and Conifer Update

Paul Wiczoreck, curator

Not much to report from the rhododendron and conifer collections. An early spring workday turned out a scant four volunteers who were able to make some progress on pulling invasives from within the plantings. We had a very well-attended rhododendron walk and talk later in the spring with many of the showiest cultivars blooming heavily after our mild, zone 6 winter.

Conifers are holding their own despite attempts by

Oriental Bittersweet to compete with them but many parts of the collection could use some more aggressive control/ removal methods.

### Editor's Note:

These two collections deserve more volunteer time to clean them up and rid them of the ever-present invasives attempting to take over. The Rhodie collection is the largest in the Northeast of the US.



# Lilac Collection Update

Kitty Werner, curator

## The weird news

Once again, the dramatic change in weather patterns dealt a weird blow to the lilac collection. As with so many lilacs around the state, the leaves are browning up and dropping, and flowers are blooming. This is definitely not normal. Between the heavy rains in the early summer, and then the heat, lilacs were hit with either a bacteria or a fungus. The heat is causing the plants to bloom. Not all of our lilacs are blooming, but some are. In the top photo, you can see the browning leaves, plus a few new leaves.



Fasciation

In May, I encountered another puzzle and asked Mark DeBard, of the ILS, what is this all about? This was a first for him, too. Our 'Donald Wyman' was sporting this weird-looking potential bloom. The answer is called "fasciation" where the plant produces flattened abnormal areas. Prune it out. 'Donald' did produce its normal blooms shortly thereafter.

I'm having issues with several lilacs changing from doubles to singles, color changes from the original color to bland pink. An example? 'Belle de Nancy' that was a stunning soft pink double, is now, two years in a row, a single, blah pink? As is the 'Wolfi' next to it? More on this as I learn about it.

## Cheers and thank yous to our volunteers

The good news is our volunteers work on cleaning up the lilacs from the invasive onslaught paid off in May doing major damage to emerging invasives and getting the lilacs ready for blooming. Because of the weird leaf drop there weren't quite as many blooms as in the past.

I was contacted by Michelle DiPinto of UVM who wanted to schedule a workday in the lilacs with some UVM employees on a test-run for future community service. On a Wednesday afternoon we spent two hours uncovering lilacs disguised as grapevines and bitter-sweet. All agreed it was great fun. A hearty thanks to Tom, Kris, Michelle and Dorian! Now, you can see the lilacs in row 5.



Before Dorian and Michelle attacked this section, you couldn't find the lilacs—it was one big sumac-consumed mass. Kris and Tom discovered more lilacs hidden under vines.

Our following Saturday workday managed to clear out even more invasives. Several of this group of volunteers are EMG interns looking for their volunteer hours. Believe me, they earned them! Jane even came back during the week and cleaned up several more.

To all our volunteers, we simply can't thank you enough! With 108 lilacs in the collection, it isn't easy to get to every one. My dream is to have all the lilacs cleaned up, mulched, pruned and presentable.

Is that an impossible dream?