

FALL 2024

GROW



THE MAGAZINE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

TREES
FOR YOUR
NEEDS
p. 28

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LETTER *from the President*

TIME FOR CHANGE

As the days grow shorter and gardens prepare for their annual slumber, a profound transformation has begun.

Nature has started to paint our world in hues of gold and crimson, inviting us to pause and reflect on the cycles of life. It is a time of harvest, of gathering the fruits of our labor, and of sowing the seeds for a bountiful tomorrow.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has always been a champion of transformation. We believe that gardens are more than just spaces of beauty. They are catalysts for change, nurturing not only plants but also the communities and individuals around them. This issue of *GROW* is a testament to and celebration of that belief.

Within these pages, you will discover a world of possibilities. We invite you to embark on a journey that explores the power of plants to transform our landscapes. In the inspiring story about the Lankenau Environmental Science Magnet High School, where young minds are cultivating a passion for gardening and environmental stewardship (see page 18), and the profile of the enchanting garden of Suzanne Penn, who has revitalized a small lot in Philadelphia's East Falls neighborhood into a stunning visual delight (page 24), we celebrate the diversity and creativity that flourish in our region.

Trees, those steadfast guardians of our environment, are the focus of this issue's photo gallery (page 28). See the best species for different settings and how they contribute to building a healthier, more sustainable community. And as autumn lays the groundwork for spring, we offer expert advice on planting bulbs for maximum visual impact to help you transform your garden into a breathtaking spectacle (page 6).

But transformation is not just about aesthetics. It's about nurturing the earth, supporting local economies, and empowering individuals. Our story on a graduate of the PHS workforce development program (page 16) highlights the transformative power of education and opportunity. And in our Learn section (page 34), you'll see how easy it is to preserve and share your garden seeds from one season to the next.

As you delve into the pages of this issue, you are sure to be inspired to embrace the transformative potential of your own green spaces. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, there is something here for everyone. Let us celebrate the beauty and resilience of nature and work together to create a greener, healthier, and more vibrant future for all.



With gratitude for your continued support,

Matt Rader
PHS President



Yellowwood trees, like this 200-plus-year-old specimen at Bartram's Garden, provide shade for people and shelter for songbirds.

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

This season, PHS offers members many ways to build their skills and to get more joy from their gardens. Here are just a few of the upcoming events. For a complete schedule and to register, go to PHSonline.org/events.

GARDEN TOUR Explore the diverse gardens at Meadowbrook Farm on October 12 with Andrew Bunting, PHS vice president of horticulture.

PERENNIAL PLANT CONFERENCE PHS is a leading sponsor of this yearly event that is held at the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College and brings together expert horticulturists to share their knowledge with professional and amateur gardeners. The conference will be held on October 18 from 7:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. Admission costs \$119, and you can attend in person or virtually.

PHS + CHANTICLEER Two great teams are working together to bring you fresh ideas for your space. The 2024 Chanticleer x PHS Gardening Series continues on October 2 with a presentation on incorporating flowering bulbs into your landscape. The workshop will be held at Chanticleer, the public garden in Wayne, Pennsylvania, from 5 to 6:30 P.M., and PHS members get \$5 off the \$45 registration fee. Attendees will receive a selection of bulbs.



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The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), an internationally recognized nonprofit organization founded in 1827, uses horticulture to advance the health and well-being of the Greater Philadelphia region. PHS programs create healthier living environments, increase access to fresh food, expand access to jobs and economic opportunity, and strengthen deeper social connections between people. PHS's work spans 250 neighborhoods; an expansive network of public gardens and landscapes; year-round learning experiences; and the nation's signature gardening event, the Philadelphia Flower Show. PHS provides everyone with opportunities to garden for the greater good as a participant, member, donor, or volunteer. For information and to support this impactful work, please visit PHSonline.org.

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GROW

Table of Contents

FALL 2024

ABOVE AND
BEYOND
p. 28

FEATURES

SEEDING THE FUTURE 18

Students at Lankenau Environmental Science Magnet High School are preparing to build a greener world.

by Scott Meyer

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS 24

A lifelong gardener finds new challenges and rewards in daily bouquet building.

by Nicole Juday

ABOVE AND BEYOND 28

See a photo gallery of trees that are expanding the canopy over our region.

Photographs by Rob Cardillo

IN EVERY ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT 1

VIEW 4

Autumn brings fresh color to the gardens at Chanticleer.

DESIGN 6

Plant masses of bulbs now for a brilliant display next spring.

KNOW 10

Six native trees, shrubs, and perennials that have earned a 2025 PHS Gold Medal Plant Award, plus how to use fall leaves.

DISCOVER 13

Glasbern in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania, has a terraced landscape and breathtaking fall views.

MEET 16

A standout baseball player finds herself a new position.

PLANT 32

Shrubs with four seasons of interest for people and wildlife.

LEARN 34

Preserve seeds from this year's crops to replant next year.

SHARE 36

Gardeners craft arrangements and celebrate the season.

ON THE COVER: This fall bouquet created by Suzanne Penn features dahlia and persicaria flowers accented with euphorbia and nasturtium leaves. See page 24 for more details. *Photograph by Rob Cardillo*

A full-page photograph of a garden in autumn. A stone path leads through a lush garden with various plants, including tall purple flowers and green foliage. In the background, a large tree with yellow and orange leaves stands next to a white house with a blue roof. The sky is clear and blue.

VIEW

Landscapes We Love



Golden Moment

In autumn, when the sunlight hits just right, the flowery lawn in front of the historic Chanticleer House in Wayne, Pennsylvania, is aglow in warm yellows, shadowed in cool greens, and dotted with pops of brighter colors that catch the eye. The diverse planting replaced what was once a high-maintenance swath of turfgrass. “There’s breathing room in a flowery lawn,” says Timothy Erdmann, the horticulturist who tends the space. “The grass is allowed to grow long but not flower, keeping a low profile and emphasizing the feeling of openness.” The late-season display features fall-blooming annuals, such as *Salvia* ‘Big Blue’ and *Salvia coccinea*, and perennials, including a mix of different milkweeds and agastaches.

Learn more about Chanticleer at chanticleergarden.org. In 2024, PHS has partnered with Chanticleer on a workshop series that helps gardeners build their knowledge and skills. Check for upcoming dates at PHSonline.org/events.

DESIGN

Fresh Ideas for Building Beauty

Light Up Your Landscape

PLANT MASSES OF BULBS NOW FOR A BRILLIANT DISPLAY NEXT SPRING.

AFTER THE LONG, DRAB WINTER, a carpet of flowering bulbs opening in succession is a visual feast that continues for weeks. Mass plantings of bulbs attract attention with big, bold blocks of color that can fit into almost any garden style. With the right selection of species, your expanse of bulbs will need little care and sustain itself for many seasons to come. To help you put the power of bulbs to work in your landscape, we checked in with a couple of pros about the best varieties and practices for growing these flowers en masse.

VARIETY CHOICES

When planning, consider the bloom time of each type and include early-, mid-, and late-season selections. “We create blends so that our gardens have a sequential display that lasts for months,” says Sam Keitch, manager of design and procurement for PHS Public Gardens and Landscapes. (You can see the show for yourself at locations such as Logan Square, Rodin Museum, and Eastern State Penitentiary.) “For early spring, I love *Crocus* varieties as a starting point. There are more available than many gardeners realize.” Grape hyacinth is another early bloomer that’s also cost-effective to plant in masses. “Generally, the shorter the species, the earlier the bloom time,” he adds.

In the middle of the season, the traditional spring favorites shine the

brightest. “The workhorses of our blends vary, but tulips and daffodils are some of our main staples,” Keitch says. For late-season color, “the *Camassia*, *Fritillaria*, and *Allium* genera are our favorites.” The latest-blooming bulb varieties tend to be the tallest.

The earliest-blooming types are ideal for growing in your lawn or around deciduous trees and shrubs, says Peggy Anne Montgomery, a horticulturist in Delaware who trained in the Netherlands and now represents Dutch bulb merchants in the US. She and her husband transformed part of their front yard into

a bulb “lawn” that blooms from late January into early May. “These varieties are critical for the first bees and other pollinators that emerge in spring,” she says, “and they are mostly finished blooming by the time you’re ready to mow the lawn.” (For more, see “Top Picks for Blooming Lawns” on page 9.)

Before you buy loads of bulbs, you might start with small amounts of the species you’d like to blend together; then expand as you see the results. Take note of what’s in bloom week to week, Keitch suggests, and “bump the numbers up based on what’s successful.”



Spring bursts into bloom around the Gateway Garden at Drexel University with a dramatic bulb display designed by the PHS team.



COLOR SCHEME

Your bulb planting will have more impact if you plan a unified color palette rather than a hodgepodge of different shades. Warm hues, such as red, orange, and yellow, are perceived by your eyes as advancing toward you. Blue, purple, and green are cool colors that appear to recede, especially in the shade. For this reason, a mass of cool-colored flowers at the rear of the yard seems to enlarge the space, while warm-colored flowers planted in the back of your space will make it



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seem smaller. Cool-colored flowers are effective near a patio or next to a sidewalk, where you can get a close-up view. Warm-colored flowers draw attention wherever they are in the landscape.

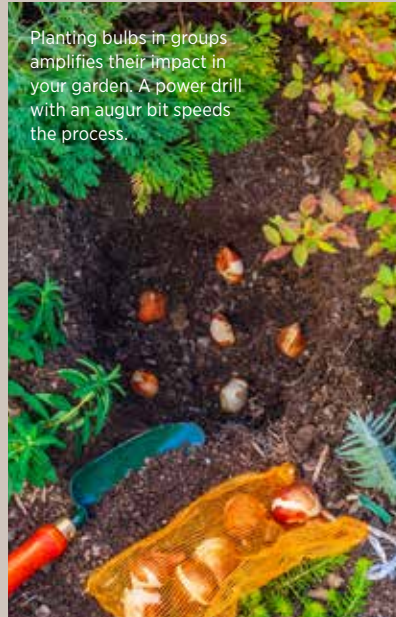
“I like to start with an overall aesthetic, such as subdued pastels or a bright-magenta mix,” Keitch says. Look for inspiration in landscapes you’ve seen. “There is nothing wrong with mimicking a style that you admire.”

In large spaces, go with three hues that are complementary, and group the different types of bulbs of the similar tint together so they can deliver a big splash of color. For smaller spaces, stick with one hue to make the planting area look larger. Mixed colors planted in a tight space create the impression the area is small. Consider including a grouping of white flowers to help other colors blend together or to brighten dark corners.

SMART STRATEGIES

The first step in a mass planting of bulbs is to organize them. “We mix bulbs based on their general bloom time, so the earliest types, like squill and *Galanthus*, go

PLANTING BULBS IN BUNCHES



Planting bulbs in groups amplifies their impact in your garden. A power drill with an augur bit speeds the process.



Plant bulbs at a depth about twice the size of the bulb. Dig trenches and layer in different-size bulbs to create the mass look. If your soil or situation doesn’t allow for trenches, you can just open up many individual holes. Simple hand tools designed for carving out space in the soil, including models with long handles so you don’t have to bend down while using them, make it easier. For large plantings, consider using a battery-powered hand drill with an augur bit attached. **“I couldn’t imagine planting thousands of bulbs without it,”** says Peggy Anne Montgomery. “It’s easy to use, but since it is a power tool, you should be extra careful while you’re working with it.”



A mowed perimeter of grass frames the flower-filled front yard at a gardener’s home in Delaware.

together into small crates or weeding buckets,” Keitch explains. “For large tulip plantings, we set bulb crates side by side and then distribute the same amount of every cultivar into each crate. When we’re finished, they contain a similar composition of blooms.” To create the mass effect, plant in layers, Keitch advises. Set larger bulbs around 10 inches deep and smaller types from 4 to 6 inches deep.

SMALL SPACES

You don’t need acres of land to have a flashy bulb display. Montgomery planted her blooming lawn in a limited area of her suburban front yard. To help it get established, she dropped a handful of granular organic bulb fertilizer into each hole after it was drilled out. To backfill the holes, she used potting mix from containers of annuals that were finished for the season.

TOP PICKS FOR BLOOMING LAWNS

The best bulbs are early blooming and low growing, says Peggy Anne Montgomery, a Delaware gardener. She recommends including these species for a colorful show from January to May.

- *Anemone blanda* (Grecian windflower)
- *Eranthis hyemalis* (winter aconite)
- *Fritillaria meleagris* (checkered fritillary)
- *Galanthus* (snowdrops)
- *Ipheion uniflorum* (spring starflower)
- *Iris reticulata* (dwarf iris)
- *Muscari* (grape hyacinths)
- *Puschkinia scilloides* var. *libanotica* (striped squill)
- *Scilla* sect. *Chionodoxa* (glory-of-the-snow)

“I left a 2-to-3-foot path around the bulb lawn to make it look intentional,” she explains. “Even when the bulbs were done blooming, it was framed and didn’t look messy. When it was time to mow the lawn, we knocked down the bulb plants with a string trimmer and left them to dry for a week. That made it manageable for the mower to mulch the clippings.”

If you garden in containers, you can still get a big pop of bulb color in the spring. “Dozens of small bulbs fit into a square foot,” Keitch says, noting that the Gateway Garden at Drexel University features bulbs in large pots. Choose varieties that bloom at different times and grow to varied heights for the most interesting look.

Wherever you plant, growing a mass of bulbs “is just about the easiest gardening you can do—you really can’t fail,” Montgomery says. “You plant, the bulbs spread and fill in naturally, and the show gets better and better every year. You get to just enjoy it.”

If you want to learn more from the PHS pros, meet other gardeners, and help bring the benefits of horticulture to everyone, volunteer at the PHS-maintained public landscapes this fall. Get dates and details at PHSonline.org/volunteer.



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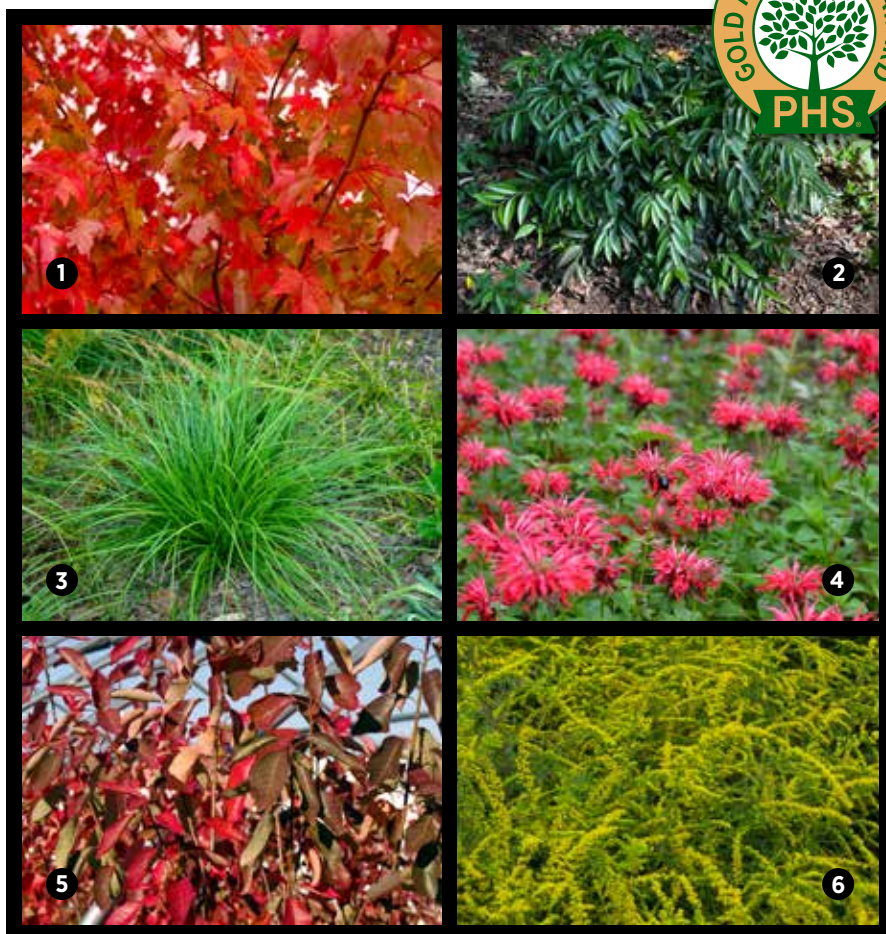
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KNOW

Hints, Tips, and News You Can Use

Winning Varieties

Fall is prime time for adding new trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs to your landscape. The experts on the PHS Gold Medal Plant Award program panel evaluate new releases and reintroduced classics for their performance in our region. The 2025 Gold Medal Plants include six distinctive native selections. “Our committee members are nominating more natives than ever before,” says Andrew Bunting, PHS vice president of horticulture. These plants look dazzling in the garden, and they support a healthy ecosystem in your yard.



1 *ACER RUBRUM* REDPOINTE

If you have a spot that stays soggy or tends to get flooded, red maples (*A. rubrum*) thrive in those conditions. Redpointe is a fast-growing cultivar that reaches 45 feet tall, but it has a tight, upright stature and straight, strong central trunk, which makes it “a great street tree because the limbs don’t spread too broadly,” Bunting says. The foliage changes from deep green in summer to fiery red in fall.

2 *LEUCOTHOE AXILLARIS* ‘REJOYCE’

‘ReJoyce’ is a broadleaf evergreen shrub that opens blazing-red new foliage in fall that lasts into winter. In spring, it bears panicles of white, urn-shaped flowers. “It gets only about 2 to 3 feet tall, so it can fit in small spaces,” Bunting says. ‘ReJoyce’ works as an alternative to boxwoods or hollies in lightly shaded foundation plantings and naturalized landscapes. “It has shown good deer resistance too,” he notes.

3 *CAREX CHEROKEENSIS*

Sedges are foliage plants often grouped with ornamental grasses, but they are native to wetlands. Cherokee sedge (this plant’s common name) is “equally suited to sites in full sun and shade in moist to average soils,” says Sam Hoadley, manager of horticultural research at Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware and a member of the PHS Gold Medal Plants committee. “This species makes a statement in every

“I shall never have the garden I have in my mind, but that for me is the joy of it; certain things can never be realized and so all the more reason to attempt them.”

—Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden* (1999)

season, thanks to its lustrous and nearly ever-green foliage and its attractive pendulous seed-heads.” Plant a single specimen in a border or container, or group in masses as a unique and effective groundcover.

4 **MONARDA ‘GARDENVIEW SCARLET’**

Summer mildew is the bane of many monarda (bee balm) varieties, but ‘Gardenview Scarlet’ has shown consistent resistance to it. The evaluators report that it is not bothered by deer. “Lots of varieties claim to be deer-resistant, but this one really is,” Bunting says. In July, feathery, bright-red flowers open on top of the 3-foot-tall stems. When ‘Gardenview Scarlet’ is in bloom, a wide range of pollinators and ruby-throated hummingbirds stop by for a visit.

5 **AMELANCHIER × GRANDIFLORA ‘AUTUMN BRILLIANCE’**

“This is a true four-season plant,” Bunting says. Like other varieties of serviceberry, it has attractive flowers in spring, which are followed in June by violet-to-purple-colored fruits that taste a bit like blueberries. ‘Autumn Brilliance’ truly stands out in fall when its foliage turns vivid orange-to-red. “As it matures, it develops smooth, silvery bark that looks great in winter,” he adds. Growing up to 25 feet tall, the shrub will produce several main stems, but you can prune it into a single trunk if you prefer that form.

6 **SOLIDAGO RUGOSA ‘FIREWORKS’**

Goldenrods bring rich color to the landscape at the end of the season, but many *Solidago* varieties are “notorious for being thuggish” because they spread aggressively, Bunting says. ‘Fireworks’ stays a modest 3 to 3½ feet tall and wide and was not invasive in trial gardens. It fares well in poor soil and is “urban tough,” he adds. The golden-yellow flowers bloom in late summer to early fall, providing late-season nourishment for pollinators.

To see all the winners and sort them according to your needs, check out the easy-to-use database at PHSONline.org/gold-medal-plants.



5 WAYS TO USE FALL LEAVES

Each autumn, nature drops a valuable garden resource right at our feet. Fallen leaves help improve and protect our beds over the winter and into the following season. Rather than stuffing leaves into trash cans or plastic bags to go to the landfill, try one (or all) of these ideas for putting them to work in your landscape.

Build your soil. Earthworms and all the other creatures in the underground food web feed on organic matter—like leaves—and break it down into the nutrients that plants’ roots can absorb. Allow the leaves to decompose in a pile for a few weeks or over the whole winter; then work them into the soil in your vegetable garden.

Shelter perennials. Top your flower gardens with an inch or two of shredded fall leaves to protect overwintering perennials from heaving out of the ground during freeze-and-thaw cycles.

Nourish your lawn. Run over fall leaves with a lawn mower and then leave them in place. As the leaves gradually decompose, they will nourish the soil food web, giving your turf a start on the next season’s growth.

Insulate crops. You can leave cold-tolerant root crops, such as carrots, beets, and turnips, in the ground over the winter and harvest as you’re ready to eat them. Blanket the soil with a fluffy layer of fall leaves to keep the ground from freezing solid, which can make it hard to pull the roots out intact.

Make compost. Blend fall leaves with plant-based kitchen scraps and you’ve got the raw ingredients for compost, the potent natural fertilizer and soil conditioner. If you already have a compost heap, pile up leaves next to it and mix them in with your kitchen scraps through the winter for balanced carbon and nitrogen inputs.

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DISCOVER

Our Region's Hidden Pockets of Green



Autumn brings brilliant color to the landscape and woodlands around the inn and its facilities. The property has several ponds bordered by diverse plantings.

Glasbern

FOGELSVILLE,
PENNSYLVANIA

WHY VISIT?

This expansive historic property in the Lehigh Valley (about 50 miles north of Philadelphia) encompasses extensive edible gardens, diverse ornamental plantings, and several landscaped ponds. The inn offers upscale dining, and it hosts weddings, corporate meetings, and other private gatherings. The buildings on the site have been

renovated with modern amenities yet retain their rustic Pennsylvania exteriors. To explore the gardens and the landscape, make a reservation for dinner or book a room.

THE BACKSTORY

The original tract of land was deeded in 1787 to Melchior Seip, a local farmer who, along with his descendants, worked it for nearly 80 years. After the tract passed through other owners and was subdivided over the subsequent decades, Beth and Al Granger in 1985 purchased a 16-acre parcel that had been an abandoned farmstead. The couple renovated and added on

to the buildings as they created a country inn and restaurant.

The site has since expanded to 100 acres, including walking trails and organic croplands worked by a local farmer. A spa and fitness center, a swimming pool, and an outdoor wedding venue are among the amenities available. Because the property is located on rolling hills, the landscape designer created four levels of plant-filled terraces around the inn. The gardens are always evolving, says Gary Levine, general manager for TKO Hospitality management company. Glasbern was purchased by the Jaindl Companies in January 2024.



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DISCOVER *Hidden Pockets of Green*

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Garden to table. Terraced beds comprising 1,200 square feet of edible gardens produce fresh vegetables, fruit, and herbs for the kitchen from spring to fall. "At the beginning of the season, I sat down with the chef, and we talked about what ingredients he wanted to create meals with and when he wanted them," says Lori Metz of Carriage House Landscape Design, who became chief horticulturist in 2024. Several varieties of tomatoes, along with peppers, eggplant, arugula, and Bibb lettuce, were among this year's most prolific crops. "I also included a lot of flowering plants with the edibles because they bring pollinators to the garden," she adds.

Rock gardens. A handful of rock gardens created by Peter Jon Snyder,

Terraced edible beds (below) produce fresh food based on the chef's menu plans. Flowering plants such as marigolds and nasturtiums are included to attract pollinators.





Small specimen trees and colorful shrubs line one of the many landscaped pathways around the inn (above).



a renowned local artisan and owner-operator of ARTganic Design, have been placed strategically around the inn. These handcrafted collections of stones and plants offer interest in all seasons. Snyder is currently constructing a new one. “Watching him and his crew work with these enormous boulders is fascinating,” Levine says. “Guests often sit nearby to watch their artistry in motion.” The newest rock garden will be completed this autumn.

Dramatic views. As you can see in the photographs accompanying this story, the gardens and the surrounding woodlands light up with brilliant colors in fall. Spring and summer bring a wide variety of trees and shrubs, including many native plants, into bloom in the cultivated and natural spaces around the inn.

Wine trail. The Lehigh Valley has received the federal government’s “American Viticultural Area” designation. It is conferred on wine-growing regions around the country to specify an appellation, or place of origin. Since 2008, wine made with grapes grown in the area can be labeled with the “Lehigh Valley” appellation. You can visit about 20 Lehigh Valley wineries within a short drive of Glasbern.

If you go

Glasbern (2141 Packhouse Rd., Fogelsville, PA; 610-285-4723) is open for dinner from 5 to 8:30 P.M. Monday to Thursday and 5 to 9 P.M. Friday to Sunday. Reservations are recommended. Spa services are available for overnight guests and locals. Get more details at glasbern.com.

MEET

People Sharing Their Passions



Janiya Victor
trained with PHS
to prepare for
her future.

All-Star in the Field

A STANDOUT BASEBALL
PLAYER FINDS HERSELF
A NEW POSITION.

JANIYA VICTOR is no stranger to working hard to achieve her goals. The 21-year-old resident of West Philadelphia had a successful career as a high school athlete, but in recent years she has been searching for a direction for her future. Thanks to the PHS Southwest tree training program, she's now learned new skills and landed a role helping to improve the quality of life for people across the city.

"I was kind of stuck, looking for a job and didn't know what I wanted to do," Victor says. "I like to step out of my comfort zone and try new things,

so when I saw the post about the open interview [for the program], I decided to see what it was about."

Victor was born in Philadelphia but spent 10 years of her childhood living in St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, the birthplace of her father, Auguste Victor. While there she developed a passion for baseball with encouragement from her father and her older brother, Najer, who became a pitcher at the University of Central Florida and was selected by the Los Angeles Angels in the 2024 MLB draft.

The family returned to this area when Victor was in eighth grade. She enrolled in Motivation High School, a magnet school operated by the Philadelphia School District, and played baseball with the boys team at Bartram High School. A shortstop, she earned first team All-Public honors as a junior and senior.

"I have a lot of energy, and I like to keep moving," she says. "I wanted a job that let me do that."

TRAINING PLAN

Victor was accepted into the spring 2024 class along with 17 other people. During the six-week course last February and March, the participants learned about landscaping and garden installation, light carpentry, tree tending and pruning, plant identification, and work-site safety. They were also provided with information about conflict resolution, health education, financial literacy, and occupational therapy.

"One of the four pillars of PHS's mission is to leverage our leadership role in the horticultural field to create visibility and opportunity for underrepresented communities and perspectives," says KG Gormley, PHS director of workforce development. "We run our trainings in some of Philly's most underresourced neighborhoods as a way to inject low-barrier opportunities for economic growth." The training programs are open to Philadelphia residents who are at least 18 years old and seeking full-time work after completion, including "returning citizens," or people who have been incarcerated, Gormley says.

Most of the skills taught were new to Victor. "I learned how to use power equipment like lawn mowers and trimmers and how to prune trees properly," she says. The most challenging aspect for her was learning to identify trees and other plants. "I got the concept of how to do it by looking at the leaves and the bark and other things," she explains. "But I think you have to study for years to know the names of all the trees."

In the process of building her knowledge, Victor found that she enjoyed working outdoors and learning about

the natural environment. “It made me want to clean up my backyard and the rest of the block where I live,” she says.

NEXT STEPS

Almost all the participants who joined Victor’s cohort graduated from the program, and 15 of them now have full-time employment in the green industry. Victor was a standout among them. “Janiya is incredibly hardworking and is dedicated to perfecting her craft,” Gormley shares. “And she has tremendous leadership skills.” After graduating at the top of her class, Victor landed a job with the City of Philadelphia’s Community Life Improvement Program (known as CLIP).

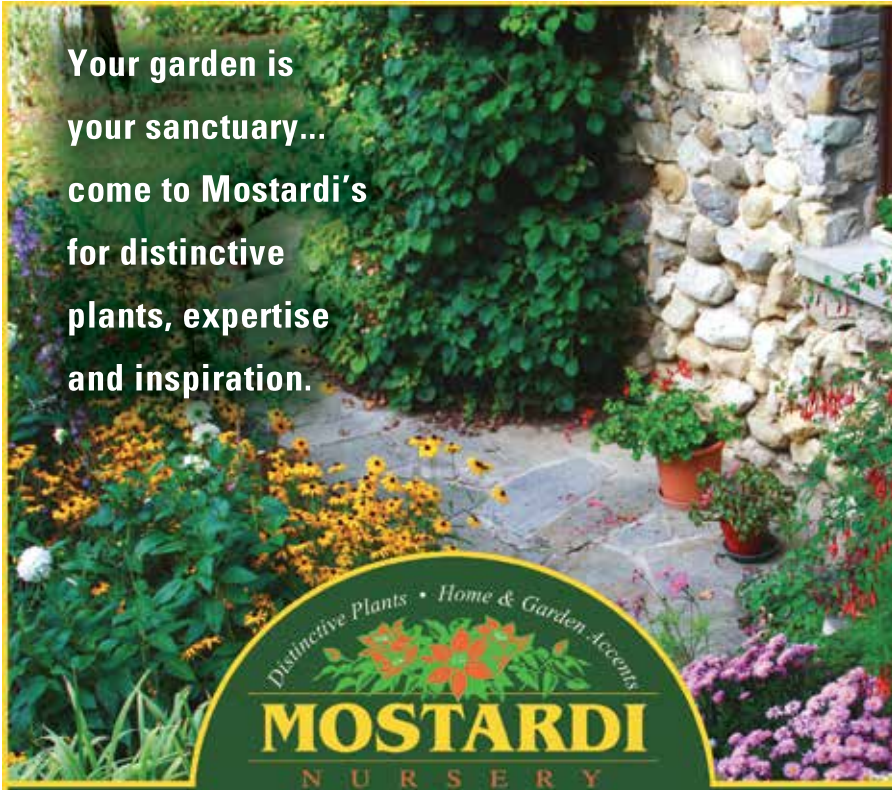
“Right now, we’re working on cleaning up graffiti,” she says. “We go to different neighborhoods around the city, and we paint over the graffiti. We try to make the neighborhoods a little nicer for people who live there.”

Victor says that the PHS training prepared her for work outside in any conditions. She’s also planning her long-term goals. “I hope to take everything I learned from PHS and on this job and someday use it to launch my own business, maybe in landscaping or tree care,” she tells us.

The PHS workforce development effort aims to prepare individuals like Victor for employment and more, Gormley explains. “Our programs not only link alumni to living-wage jobs in their communities but also create ambassadors who can take their knowledge of horticulture back into their neighborhoods.”

Victor went a step further, recommending the tree training program to her father, Auguste. “He was looking for a new career, and I told him about PHS,” she says. He joined the next session, which began in September 2024. “He already knows a lot about plants and things like that,” the daughter says. “I know this training will help him find his next job.”

To learn more about PHS workforce development and how you can support it, go to PHSonline.org/programs/workforce-development-programs.



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SEEDING *the* FUTURE

*Students at a Philadelphia public high school
are preparing to build a greener world.*



by SCOTT MEYER *photographs by* ROB CARDILLO



Lankenau students learn through hands-on experiences with the natural world around their school and across the city. Food from their garden is shared with local food pantries. Sahfi Reed (below), now a Lankenau graduate, will major in environmental science at the University of Houston.

On a weekday morning in spring, Lankenau Environmental Science Magnet High School is bustling with activity. Many of the students are outside, working in groups on the expanse of green surrounding the building. They're learning math, science, social studies, and the other standard high school courses through their interactions with nature, plants, and gardens and the support of a faculty that prioritizes independent investigation. The students are also laying the foundation for careers that help value and preserve our natural environment.

Lankenau, located in Philadelphia's northwestern corner, is a public school open to students from across the city. It's a magnet school, so students can choose to enroll rather than go to their nearest neighborhood schools, but they must meet basic requirements for academic performance and attendance in middle school. Plus they must apply for acceptance. Enrollment is limited to about 300.

Most students come from neighborhoods where they have little or no access to green spaces, and many have their first contact with nature at the school. "To be an inner-city kid in this environment is amazing," says **Sahfi Reed**, a senior who travels more than 90 minutes by bus each day from West Philadelphia. "Coming here has been an eye-opening experience; it's changed my life. Most city kids don't know about climate change or the food desert crisis."

PHS has become an important partner, supplying expertise and supplies to the school, as it does with many others across the region. Sally McCabe, PHS associate director of community education, serves as the chair of Lankenau's Occupational Advisory Council, helping to ensure the curriculum aligns with green industry expectations. To help build awareness about the school across the city, McCabe hosted a community seed swap there in spring 2024. "Sally sent out the announcement to her entire contact list, and we had gardeners from all over Philadelphia here," says Jessica McAtamney, the school's principal. "It was a great chance to show what we're about."



"To be an inner-city kid in this environment is amazing."

—Sahfi Reed



The students got to see the power of horticulture in action at the 2024 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show. “I had the delightful honor of working with almost 20 of the seniors who volunteered in the Kids Cocoon,” an interactive play area for families, McCabe says. “It’s crucial for PHS to be supporting the high schools that teach horticulture and environmental sciences,” she adds; “otherwise, where are our future horticulturists going to come from?”

OUTSIDE EXPERIENCE

The Lankenau building had been part of Germantown High School, but in 2006 it was recast as a magnet school focused on hands-on learning opportunities through engagement in Philadelphia’s robust green industry.

The Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education (SCEE), which is just across the road from the school, serves as a living classroom to explore. “I love going for walks in the woods with our teachers and learning about everything that we see,” says **Charlize Crosby**, a senior from Germantown, whose eyes light up as she speaks. Her words are echoed by other students. “This school is a great opportunity for kids in the

“This school is a great opportunity for kids in the city to get into nature through trips and internships.”

—Cece Henderson

Cece Henderson (above) earned a summer fellowship at the Center for Urban Agriculture at the University of Georgia as a high school freshman. Anaya Boston (right) is digging into food equity and local farming.





“Here we’re always learning, but we don’t have to just listen to someone in a classroom. We’re outside and using our hands.”

—Nicholas Cash Lewandowski

city to get into nature through trips and internships,” explains **Cece Henderson**, a freshman from West Philadelphia. In the most recent school year, four Lankenau students had internships at SCEE, helping to maintain its landscape and facilities and developing a curriculum to teach younger visitors about the natural world.

The city’s diverse landscapes present many settings where students can see first-hand the impact people have on the environment. “The students visited an EPA Superfund site at an abandoned dump in South Philadelphia,” says Jon Hoffmeier, a math teacher. “They saw how certain trees and plants growing on this kind of site can help it recover. That’s real to these kids.”

An aptitude for and interest in science brings many students to the school, and they develop their knowledge of and enthusiasm for nature and plants through their classes. “I was always into science,” says **Alix Morris**, a senior from the Girard neighborhood. “Here I found out that I really like working with plants. I love the sensory part of it.”

For **Nicholas Cash Lewandowski**, a sophomore from Manayunk, the school’s main appeal was the active approach to teaching. “I was always outside when I was a little kid, and I guess I still am,” he says with a smile. “I’m not good at sitting still for a long time. Here we’re always learning, but we don’t have to just listen to someone in a classroom. We’re outside and using our hands.”

CLASSROOM EXTENSION

Lankenau offers both traditional AP courses and partnerships with Penn, Pitt, and other Pennsylvania universities to allow seniors to learn at a college level and earn credits before they graduate from high school. The 12th graders can also partake in external internships throughout the city to explore their interests as they directly and indirectly relate to environmental science. Through the yearlong program, students gain practical knowledge and begin to build a professional network.



Nicholas Cash Lewandowski (top) wanted a school where he could keep moving and build his technical skills. Alix Morris (above) came with a passion for science and lab work.

Marc Bowman (bottom) won a prize at a national conference for his presentation on community gardens. The best part of school for Charlize Crosby (below) is exploring the landscape, which includes the nearby Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education.



“Now I love learning how agriculture benefits everyone, and I think that farmers are the real superheroes who get everybody what they need. I admire that.”

—Anaya Boston

In the 2022–23 school year, Lankenau launched a career-training program known as AFNR (Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources). It is designed to help students to explore agribusiness, animal systems, biotechnology, environmental service systems, food products and processing systems, natural resource management, and more. The first year, 18 students participated in the program, and enrollment grew to 40 in 2024.

“As the ag instructor, I want to help the students to have a greater appreciation for conservation, ecology, and habitat management,” says Dan McMonagle. “These kids are going to be facing environmental challenges ahead, and they will have to make big decisions about policy. We’re equipping them to make those decisions.”

“I’ve always been good at science, but it wasn’t until I got into 11th grade that I realized how interested I am in the agricultural and environmental side of it,” says **Anaya Boston**, a junior from the city’s Northeast section. “Now I love learning how agriculture benefits everyone, and I think that farmers are the real superheroes who get everybody what they need. I admire that.”

The school has recently established one of the region’s first chapters of Junior MANRRS, or Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences. MANRRS is a nonprofit founded by a group of students and faculty at Michigan State and Penn State Universities to develop a network that connects minority college students in agricultural and natural resources disciplines with professionals from academic institutions, government entities, and organizations within these industries.

Junior MANRRS is the version for high school students, and in 2024 a group from Lankenau attended the MANRRS annual conference in Chicago. **Marc Bowman**, a senior from the West Oak Lane section of Philadelphia, earned a second-place finish in a public-speaking competition. “I talked about how community gardens are hubs that aspire to inspire other community groups,” he says.





TEACHING TEACHERS

Cultivating a lifelong love of gardening starts at an early age. Through the Green City Teachers program, PHS shows teachers, community leaders, parents, and others how to create and maintain sustainable youth gardens. While the annual hands-on workshop is designed for educators who want to bring environmental lessons into the classroom and inspire kids to get out into the garden, it is free and open to the public. You do not need to be a teacher or work in Philadelphia to attend.

Jessica McAtamney, the principal at Lankenau Environmental Science Magnet High School, participated in the PHS Green City Teachers program in her previous role as an agriculture teacher at W. B. Saul High School in the Roxborough neighborhood. “I was qualified to teach about crops and propagation,” she says. Green City Teachers “taught me about the importance of collaboration with other educators, with community groups, and with many others who can help our students.”

Find out about upcoming sessions of Green City Teachers at PHSONline.org/events.

Sally McCabe of PHS trains educators across the region in creating and maintaining youth gardens. She’s an advisor to Lankenau and hosts seed swaps at the school.

GROWING FORWARD

The AFNR program will be expanding to four years for the 2024–25 school year, and McMonagle is excited to see what the kids can do. “In the freshman and sophomore years, we’ll be scaffolding the students,” providing support as they learn how to manage projects, he says. “By junior and senior years, they will be running jobs with the younger students. We won’t be telling them what to do; they’ll already know.”

The 2024 seniors are moving on to their next steps. Charlize Crosby will major in biology at West Chester University with the goal of becoming a physician assistant. Alix Morris has been accepted at Hofstra University to study biochemistry and sees work as a researcher in the future. Marc Bowman is aiming for a bachelor’s degree in nursing and science and a minor in agriculture at Lincoln University.

Sahfi Reed interned with the USDA’s wholesale produce distribution center in Philadelphia. “It’s been so helpful to get my first professional experience even before I go to college,” Reed says. He’s also an accomplished track-and-field athlete who has received a scholarship to attend the University of Houston beginning in the fall of 2024. “I’m going to major in environmental science,” he says. “I’ve already had the chance to make a presentation to the EPA on a project we worked on at school, and I hope to someday work for the EPA.”

Next year’s Lankenau students will be taking on a new challenge: creating the school’s first exhibit for the 2025 Philadelphia Flower Show. It’s one more way that they’ll put their minds and their hands to work building a greener world. “The students come here as freshmen with little knowledge or experience about nature or farming,” Hoffmeier says, “and we watch them leave as environmental activists and leaders.” 🌱

Scott Meyer is editorial director of GROW. Learn more about Lankenau Environmental Science Magnet High School at lankenau.philasd.org.



Making Arrangements

A LIFELONG GARDENER FINDS NEW CHALLENGES AND REWARDS IN DAILY BOUQUET BUILDING.

by NICOLE JUDAY *photographs by* ROB CARDILLO





By midsummer, Suzanne Penn (opposite) is gathering a wide variety of flowering annuals and perennials, including 'Scheherazade' orienpet lilies, roses, monardas, and persicarias (left). A handmade vessel (below) contains an arrangement of phlox, allium, and buddleia flowers, enhanced by dramatic fronds of Hakone grass, evoking the constant motion of a summer garden.



Each morning, well before the first ray of sun skims over the treetops, Suzanne Penn starts the day in her garden. As an artist and art conservator, she has a practiced eye that can focus on details most of us would miss: she'll remove a single, withered leaf from a potted begonia or relocate a perennial by inches to give it a few more minutes of sunlight.

In recent years, she's added an additional and enjoyable element to her daily ritual—perusing the garden, clippers in hand, for blooms, seedpods, and foliage to use in the flower arrangements she creates daily from materials she grows. She often photographs the results.

An expert gardener for decades, Penn developed an interest in flower arranging after she was asked to provide the flowers for her son's wedding in 2021. As with her many other creative pursuits, she began this one through intensive learning. She researched both the art of flower arranging and how to grow flowers for cutting; then she refined her techniques over the seasons, making careful notes of her successes and failures. With practice, she's amassed a wealth of firsthand knowledge that she cheerfully shares with fellow gardeners—and now PHS members here in *GROW*.



Each morning, Penn examines the borders (left) for flower and foliage stems to combine into her arrangement of the day. Another handmade vase (below) contains seed-grown 'Sahara' rudbeckia flowers enhanced by the variegated foliage of *Persicaria virginiana* 'Painter's Palette', euphorbia, and sprigs of butterfly weed.

Penn's garden takes up almost every inch of surface on her small city lot in the East Falls neighborhood of Philadelphia. Ornamental trees are strategically placed for shade and screening, while grass paths are just wide enough to allow passage between undulating garden beds. Over the years, she's squeezed in two ponds and several seating areas. A dedicated plant collector, Penn groups together the plants she's most interested in (currently bromeliads and rare begonias), setting up living tableaux throughout the garden.

PLANTING TO CUT

When growing flowers for arrangements, Penn is a bit of a segregationist. Each flower type is grouped together and planted cheek by jowl in rows, with drip irrigation hoses running parallel to the rows. "In a cutting garden, you won't feel bad about harvesting every single flower from a plant, as you might in a mixed border," she points out. "It's about production, not at all about aesthetics."

A cutting garden can provide a steady harvest of blooms without taking up much space. A 5-by-10-foot section of lawn, she notes, can be converted easily for production, supplying bouquets and arrangements for most of the growing season. She recommends getting the soil tested before planting to find out

whether amendments are needed to optimize the soil for flower production. While there's no minimum space requirement, sunlight is essential. Six hours of direct sun is the minimum for productive cutting gardens.

Long-stemmed, flowering annuals are the best choices for a cutting garden, as they bloom profusely for months at a time. Penn looks for plants that are described as "cut and come again," like many forms of zinnias, which continue to branch and produce new blooms throughout the season. Many of her plants are grown from seed, either sown directly in the garden or in starting containers indoors, both for economy and for the opportunity to grow unusual varieties that are rarely found in nurseries.

Dahlias make up a large portion of Penn's cutting garden. One plant can produce more than 100 flowers, beginning in July and continuing into October or later, surpassing the production of almost every other flowering plant. Their colors range from the deepest chocolate to pure white, with reds, pinks, oranges, and yellows in between. With many varieties growing up to 6 feet tall, statuesque dahlias can anchor the border or cutting bed. Penn compares them to mature tomato vines, which are not grown for their appearance but rather for their harvest. And while many people



Top Cuts

If you want a steady supply of flowers and other materials for arrangements, grow these plants in your garden for their prolific blooms and long vase lives:

- Benary's Giant Series zinnias
- 'Bouquet' dill
- Chocolate cosmos
- "Cut and come again" zinnia varieties
- Dahlias
- 'Dara' Queen Anne's lace
- Hydrangeas
- Peonies
- 'Sahara' rudbeckia
- Strawflowers

These plants provide foliage and texture to arrangements:

- Amsonias
- Bronze fennel
- Bupleurums
- Honeywort (*Cerinthe major*)
- Hostas
- Nandinas

believe they must dig up and store dahlia tubers indoors in the winter, she's found that most will overwinter in the ground and resprout the following year.

FUNDAMENTAL FOLIAGE

Flowering annuals provide the foundation for most of Penn's arrangements, but she looks to the rest of her garden for other components of her floral designs. Her beds and borders are packed with a wide variety of plants, many of them featuring the vibrant red, pink, orange, and purple hues that she most loves. Perennials and woody plants may not have the long bloom season of annuals, but when they are at their peak, many provide attractive blooms that fit into her bouquets. Examples include hydrangeas, garden phlox varieties, and lilies.

Foliage plants are also indispensable. "Sometimes I make arrangements with nothing but flowers, but leafy stems offer so much interest," she notes. "Feathery textures and forms that drape over the edge of a vase are typically provided by foliage." She likes ornamental grasses, euphorbias, ferns, and especially fennel fronds to add contrasting shapes, colors,

and patterns to her designs. Including foliage is an effective way to stretch materials, as well, Penn says. "If you have only a few special flowers, you can make them the focal points."

Penn is dedicated to creating something every single day. She produces textiles and sews her own clothing. More recently, she has taken to crafting beautiful ceramic vessels specifically designed to showcase her arrangements. They are often inspired by antique shapes and techniques she is teaching herself about. Because Penn is so prolific, her exquisite creations can start to pile up over time—a problem most of us would appreciate having. "I love arranging because I can make something and not worry about keeping it forever," she explains. "I get the experience and process of the creative act, but I don't have to end up with a permanent artifact."

From her point of view, flowers, both in the garden and in the vase, feed her desire to experiment, create, and never stop learning. 🌿

Nicole Juday is the author of Private Gardens of Philadelphia (Gibbs Smith, 2024).

Bouquet Garden Hints

Suzanne Penn shares some of her secrets to success with raising cutting flowers.

Enhance branching. Pinch new growth at an early stage to help the plant branch and produce more flower buds.

Snip early. Cut flowers as early in the morning as possible, when their stems are holding the most moisture, and immediately place the flowers in a container of water.

Blanch stems. For the longest-lasting flowers, place cut stems in boiling water for a few seconds and then in cool water for several hours before arranging.

Mix and match. When arranging, try to vary the forms and sizes of the flowers. Combine cushion shapes with spikes, tassels, and umbels for pleasing balance.

Prolong life. Adding a flower preservative to the water can extend the longevity of the bouquet. A few teaspoons of vinegar in the water is an easy substitute for commercial formulas.

Consider alternatives. Look to your garden for overlooked plants that could be useful in arrangements. Hosta leaves, cuttings from shrubs, houseplant foliage, and even certain weeds can be attractive when paired with flowers in bloom.



Penn often ends her days resting on a patio overlooking a naturalistic pond. Here marginal water plants are tucked between the rocks to keep their roots wet. A gravel garden with plants that like dry conditions forms an apron around the pond area, providing contrast.

ABOVE & BEYOND

*See five native trees that are expanding
the canopy over our region.*

photographs by ROB CARDILLO

Every fall, PHS Tree Tenders and other volunteers from across the Delaware Valley help PHS to distribute and plant thousands of saplings across the city and surrounding suburbs. The goal of this ongoing effort is to bring the many benefits of tree cover to every resident. A robust tree canopy keeps homes and streets cooler during the peak of hot temperatures, reduces flooding from heavy storms, provides habitat for wildlife, and generates fresh air. Crime rates are lower in neighborhoods with substantial tree cover than they are in areas where trees are more sparse, and the people living nearby have better physical and mental health.

PHS offers free or low-cost saplings to community groups to plant along streets and other places accessible to the public where there is an organized PHS Tree Tenders group. PHS provides hand tools and takes care of cutting open sidewalks in the city to create planting spaces. The trees are selected from 22 different species by the suburban planting teams with guidance from PHS. The five on the following pages are beautiful throughout the year and well adapted to tough conditions. And they are suited to home landscapes in our area, says Dana Dentice, manager of PHS tree programs. Along with the inspiring photos are descriptions that explain why she recommends them. 🌿

To join the effort to restore the tree canopy, go to PHSonline.org/programs/tree-programs.



CARPINUS CAROLINIANA

American hornbeam (also known as musclewood or blue beech) is a slow-growing understory tree that tolerates a wide range of soils, moisture levels, and light, including full shade (partial shade is ideal). This underutilized native tree sustains wildlife, such as songbirds, and brings winter interest to your yard with its smooth, fluted trunk that appears muscular. American hornbeam has impressive orange and scarlet fall color and is notably disease- and pest-resistant. In spring, it forms catkins, or drooping flower clusters, which become distinctive clusters of winged nutlets.



CLADRASTIS KENTUKEA

Yellowwood, a medium-size native, makes an attractive specimen in the yard, but it's too big for streetside planting. Its pendulous, intensely fragrant white flowers begin blooming in late spring to early summer about 8 to 10 years after planting. It forms a spreading crown that attracts songbirds and pollinators. Yellowwood roots go deep, so other plants grow well around its base. Once established, the tree is drought-tolerant, has no significant insect or disease issues, and requires little maintenance overall.





OSTRYA VIRGINIANA

The American hophornbeam (or ironwood) is a medium-size, slow-growing, native understory tree that is widely adaptable, drought-tolerant after established, and low-maintenance. Its fruit resembles hops and is eaten by songbirds and small mammals.

CRATAEGUS VIRIDIS 'WINTER KING'

A small, native green hawthorn, this selection (photographed at Chanticleer) brings resilience and beauty to yards, streets, and parks across the region. It's drought-tolerant and adaptable to various soil types. Its delicate white flowers in the spring attract bees and butterflies and later develop into red berries that offer winter interest and food for birds.

QUERCUS ALBA

White oak is a keystone species in this region, providing food and habitat for a diverse array of wildlife throughout the year. This long-lived tree is a hardy, drought-tolerant native that adapts to a range of site conditions. Unlike most other trees in this gallery, white oak grows too large to plant along streets, but it thrives in spaces where it can spread out.



PLANT

What We're Growing



Four-Season Sensations

YOUR YARD WILL BE VIBRANT ALL YEAR WHEN YOU PLANT THESE EXCEPTIONAL SHRUBS.

YOU MIGHT THINK of late fall and winter as “dead” times in the garden, when the brilliant colors of flowers and foliage fade out and all you can see are evergreens and bare tree limbs. But the most interesting gardens are full of plants that draw your attention in every month.

Shrubs, or small woody plants, play a key role in the cold-weather landscape while providing color and structure in the other seasons. They can also be valuable resources for local wildlife during the dormant parts of the year. Which shrubs are best for your garden? Leah Blanton, design and procurement manager of PHS Public Gardens and Landscapes, recommends a handful of worthy choices for our region.

BERRY NICE

“Some of the best four-season-interest shrubs are those with spring flowers

followed by berries, and I can’t think of a better choice than *Vaccinium corymbosum*,” or highbush blueberry, she says. Native *Vaccinium* species are among the first shrubs to bloom each year, making them important food sources for the earliest pollinators that emerge in spring. In summer, the bushes produce plentiful, juicy blueberries that nourish people, birds, and other wildlife. The foliage on these shrubs turns a brilliant red in autumn, and after the leaves drop, you’ll notice the plants’ interesting structural form and tawny peeling bark over the winter. The cultivar ‘Patriot’ is both productive and easy to grow, Blanton notes.

Highbush blueberry (above left) bears colorful, edible berries in fall. The late-summer blooms of shrubby St. John’s wort (above right) attract droves of pollinators, and the colorful stems of red-osier dogwood stand out in winter.



In autumn the foliage of oakleaf hydrangea (above) gradually turns a deep-maroon hue. Summer Wine ninebark (left) bears small, pink flower clusters in late spring and crimson foliage in fall.

POLLINATOR PARADISE

Hypericum prolificum (shrubby St. John's wort) produces an abundance of dense, slender foliage throughout the spring, and in the summer months, it explodes into exuberant yellow flowers that attract droves of pollinators. Its golden fall foliage contrasts with the dried brown seed capsules, which persist through the winter as food for wildlife. "Possibly the most compelling features are the vibrant, russet-brown exfoliating bark and mounded structure, which add drama in the starkness of winter," Blanton says. "Shrubby St. John's wort is a host plant to the larvae of several species of butterflies and moths, including the

wavy-lined emerald moth and the gray hairstreak butterfly, making it a valuable native plant." This species is not found in every local nursery, but it's worth seeking out.

RED, WHITE, AND BLUE

Cornus sericea (red-osier dogwood, also sold as *Swida sericea*) is a "go-to plant for many landscape restorations, boasting a wide range of uses in home gardens," Blanton says. "An exceptional shrub for wildlife, rain gardens, and woodland edges, it also provides four seasons of interest." Its green foliage contrasts with red suckering stems that stand out in the winter months. Spring flowers yield berries that turn from white to blue and persist long after other fruits have dropped, supplying food for mammals and birds. These shrubs are responsive to pruning and produce more of the colorful stems when regularly rejuvenated, she emphasizes.

BOLD BLOOMS

Hydrangea quercifolia (oakleaf hydrangea) is a versatile and highly adaptable

WOW IN WINTER

When looking for plants to keep your garden engaging in the offseason, consider these five factors.

Form and structure. The shapes of woody plants become like natural sculptures after all the foliage has fallen and their "bones" are revealed.

Exfoliating bark. Some trees and shrubs regularly shed their skin, or bark, in ways that produce distinctive patterns along their trunks.

Seedheads. At the end of the season, ornamental grasses and many perennial flowers produce attractive clusters of seeds that can stand through the winter.

Berries. You get a pop of color in the drab months from the red, blue, purple, black, or even white fruits that form on some shrubs. Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) and American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) are two popular berry-bearing choices.

Wildlife. A garden full of native plants bearing seeds and berries and providing places to perch will attract a colorful variety of birds and other cold-hardy creatures. What could be more interesting than that?

native shrub with the potential to fulfill many roles in the garden. Tactile foliage (that entices you to touch it) emerges in early spring and grows into large, deeply lobed leaves. "The shrub is adorned with oversized, cone-shaped blooms throughout the summer, and these white flowers take on an antique-blush quality as they age," Blanton says. The leaves turn deep shades of maroon through the fall, while long-lasting seedheads and peeling bark hold your interest in winter.

DARK DRAMA

Physocarpus opulifolius 'Seward' (a ninebark cultivar sold as Summer Wine) has a graceful, arching form and sports dramatic burgundy foliage throughout the growing season. Small, pink flower clusters that cover the stems in late spring are followed by dark, rose-colored fruit and crimson foliage in fall. "The distinctive fountain shape is highlighted in winter by the exfoliating bark in various shades of light and reddish brown," she says. This native shrub lends contrast, color, form, and a long season of interest in the landscape.

LEARN

How to Get More from Your Garden



Savings Plan

PRESERVE SEEDS FROM THIS YEAR'S CROPS TO REPLANT NEXT YEAR.

FARMERS AND GARDENERS have for centuries been saving the seeds from their harvest to grow the next season. This helps to reduce costs and ensures a reliable supply of the varieties that the growers know will perform well. Seed savers are the reason that 'Brandywine' tomato and many other popular heirlooms are available today. Replanting seeds from your healthiest plants each year results over time in strains that are well adapted to your specific conditions and tastes.

Collecting and saving vegetable and herb seeds is easy and fun. You can save seeds of just about any garden plant, though some require you to use a few simple techniques. Here are tips on getting started and the best crops to try.

SMART CHOICES

Open-pollinated vs. hybrid. Seeds from open-pollinated varieties, often identified with "OP" in catalogs and on packets, produce plants with the same characteristics as the "parent" plants. Seeds from hybrid varieties (typically labeled as "F1"), on the other hand, produce a unique first generation of seeds. Saving and replanting hybrid seeds may yield unpredictable results, but you can preserve and grow seeds from just about any open-pollinated variety.

Cross-pollination care. Squash, pumpkins, and melons readily cross-pollinate, which may yield unusual variations in the fruit. The seeds from that crop may also come with undesirable traits that will be manifested when the seeds are saved and replanted. Isolate cross-pollinated crops to preserve their genetic individuality, or just stick to saving self-pollinated plants, such as beans and lettuce.

Quality selection. The crops from your saved seeds will be healthiest and most productive if you gather them from the best-performing plants in your gar-

den. They are likely to carry resistance to the common problems in your conditions, and over a few generations, you will have created your own strains that thrive in your garden every season.

STORAGE STEPS

To prevent fungi from growing on the seeds you're saving, wait until they are completely free of moisture before storing them. That can take a week or more. When they're fully dry, pour the seeds into envelopes or small jars and label each one with the variety and the date. Keep all your seeds in a dark, cool, and dry place until you're ready to sow them again next year.

CROP BY CROP

Beans and peas. Let some pods dry on the vine for a few weeks after harvesting the last fresh ones. When the pods are brown and the seeds rattle around inside, pry them open and take out the seeds. Let the seeds dry for two more weeks in a cool, dry, dark place.

Herbs. Snip the dried flowers on herbs such as dill, fennel, basil, and cilantro and put them into a paper bag. After they have dried further for a few days, rub them with your hands to release the seeds into the bag.

Lettuce. When the little yellow flowers turn into white dandelion-like puffs, cut them off and put them in a paper bag away from direct sunlight. When they're completely dry, in a week or so, use your hands to separate the tiny black seeds from the flowers.

Okra. Allow a few of the pods to grow large and turn brown. The seeds are ready if you hear them rattling when you shake the pods. Split open the pods, remove the seeds, and spread the seeds out on a tray in a cool, dark place to finish drying.



After mature pepper seeds dry fully, they're ready to replant.

SWAP AND SHARE

Trading your saved seeds can get you back unique varieties for your garden. Arrange informal swaps with gardeners you know or join in one hosted by a local garden club. Many libraries in our region, including the Free Library of Philadelphia, organize annual seed swaps and even have collections that gardeners can “check out” seeds from and contribute seeds to.

If you're saving seeds, you'll likely have more than you can plant or trade. Give some to a beginner, along with growing information, and you'll sow the benefits of growing food beyond your own plot!

Peppers. When the pods are full-grown and colorful, and start to look a little wrinkled, snip them off the vine. Cut the pods open, scrape out the seeds, rinse them, and allow them to dry on a cloth or paper towel.

Tomatoes. To remove the gel sacs around the seeds, cut a fully ripe tomato in half and scoop out the seedy center into a small jar or container labeled with the variety name. You can eat the rest of the tomato. Add a quarter to a half cup of water and set the jar out of direct sunlight for five days. Scrape off the moldy film that forms on top, add more water, and stir. The viable seeds will soon sink. Strain out the water and any remaining pulp. Rinse the seeds, drain them, and allow them to dry.

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SHARE

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PLANTS, PEOPLE, AND PLACES

The growing season brings PHS members and other gardeners together to share their bounty, knowledge, and creativity. As you can see here, summer 2024 offered a wide range of opportunities to feel the joy. The fun continues into the fall with PHS events in a variety of locations. Get all the details at PHSonline.org/events.



Three graduates (left) of PHS workforce development training flash their diplomas and smiles. (Learn more on page 16.)



In June, PHS was a sponsor of the Nicetown and Tioga Unity Dinner (above), which celebrated the Tioga-Hope Park and Garden with free food, live music, and community spirit.

An enthusiastic bunch of plant lovers (below) joined the workshop on "Designing with Natives in the Garden and Vase" at the PHS Pop Up Garden at Manayunk.





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